

Gov. Ehrlich visits St. Michaels

Brings state's share of funding for nature trail

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ST. MICHAELS - Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. spent a busy night on the town here Friday, presenting nearly half a million dollars in state funding for a nature trail, popping in for a gubernatorial fundraiser sponsored by the owners of the Carpenter Street Saloon, and finishing off the evening with his 12th annual appearance at the Maryland Asphalt Association's Hot Mixer at the Harbourtowne Golf Resort and Conference Center.

Ehrlich made his first local appearance at San Domingo Creek Park, where he announced the state's commitment of a \$471,000 toward the construction of the St. Michael's Nature Trail. The proposed 1.25-mile trail, which has been in the works for more than four years, is expected to cost at least \$1.1 million and run from state Route 33 near Woodside Avenue through San Domingo Creek Park and end at Bradley Park.

The first phase of the project would concentrate on the area around San Domingo Creek Park and would include the construction of a bridge and a tidal marsh. The Rotary Club of St. Michaels, Environmental Concern Inc., and the West Elm Street Developers have been instrumental in raising matching funds for the project and organizers are continuing to raise money for the project. State officials also presented Community Legacy grants to the St. Michaels Development Corp. and to the Town of Easton for \$20,000 and \$50,000, respectively.



PHOTO BY ERIN FLUHARTY Pictured from the left are Sen. Richard Colburn, R-37-Mid Shore, Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich, Del. Jeannie Haddaway, R-37B-Talbot, Del. Adelaide Eckardt, R-37B-Dorchester and President of the Easton Town Council John Ford as Gov. Robert Ehrlich announces a check for the town of Easton in the amount of \$50,000 for improvements.

Ehrlich, while thanking the two other members of the Board of Public Works, William Donald Schaefer and Nancy K. Kopp, for making the trail grant possible, managed to slide in a joke about the controversy-courting Schaefer.

"He hasn't said anything today, has he?" Ehrlich asked. "Never mind."

Ehrlich also used the opportunity to talk about growth and development, and he reminded the audience that "Maryland is a hot state" because of growing economic opportunities and because "we're not putting up walls at the state line."

He said state grants could be used to make towns like St. Michaels exemplary places to live, in addition to being tourist magnets. But development must be balanced with environmental responsibility, he said, and the permanent easement protection of one in five acres in Maryland is one way this is being accomplished.

"We have a moral obligation to do everything we can to ... preserve this way of life," he said.

Ehrlich then stopped by the home of John and Diana Mautz at 23942 Porter's Creek Lane for a fundraiser, before dropping by the Asphalt Association event at the Harbourtowne Resort.

Ehrlich was no stranger here, and he credited the organization with being a major supporter throughout his political career. "You've literally allowed me to be governor," he told the audience.

By helping as his fundraisers, the association helped him escape being a part-time state executive and "a shake-down artist the rest of the day."

Ehrlich took the audience back to his first shot at the governor's office, back to when people asked him, "Why did you leave Congress? Are you stupid?" he said. "And that was from my friends."

But he has always been a risk-taker, he said, and surrounded himself with risk-takers. "People who do not take risks are pretty boring," he said. If his bid for re-election were to fail, he said he would have the satisfaction of knowing "that we did it the right way" and "the way I wanted it done."

"In life, it doesn't get any better than that," Ehrlich said.

Ehrlich, in fielding a question about runningmate Kristen Cox, went on to spend a good chunk of his speech explaining her character and qualifications, and talking about an angry voter who recently approached him with complaints regarding Cox's blindness.

"[Cox] has never allowed her lack of sight to prevent her from doing anything," he said. "She has met obstacle after obstacle in life and just run right over them."