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page 10

PUBLISHED SINCE 1948 FOR THE TOWN OF GLEN ECHO, MARYLAND ~ CHARTERED IN 1904 ~ FEBRUARY 2026

TOWN COUNCIL NOTES

Mayor Costello convened the Council meeting on January 12 along with Town Manager Susan Theis and all four Council Members, though Council Member Tanner was virtual. Also virtual was a scout working on a merit badge.

Council and Mayoral Updates

Council Member Spealman raised the possibility of having a receptacle for dead batteries in Town Hall where residents could drop off. He will look into next steps and local drop off locations. Mr. Spealman also mentioned a small Maryland town—Colmar Manor—that installed stop-sign and speed cameras around their town to have the dual effect of curbing dangerous driving and raising some funds. He said that the town only gets to keep 10 percent of the ticket revenue but that meant \$100k last year. Mr. Spealman came with another idea: We should invite local lawmak-

ers to come to Council meetings. Mayor Costello agreed but said we'd need to wait until after the next session when they are less busy.

Mayor Costello reported that she's been approached by several residents asking if it was safe to protest ICE along MacArthur Boulevard. She's been referring them to the ACLU's bystander training. She also said she'd raise it with our local police contact. She'll be meeting with him to discuss the recent Cabin John home break-ins and burglaries and a middle-of-the-day car break-in

on Vassar Circle that had happened earlier that day. Council Member Stiglitz added that he had called 911 after hearing gunshots and squealing car tires in Glen Echo park parking lot around midnight in early January.

Mayor Costello updated the Council on some of the big pending projects in the area. However, there wasn't a lot of actual updated information. The trestle bridge removal is on hold, and WMATA will begin with the one in Georgetown. The Clara Barton House rehab, at first budgeted for \$28M

and now \$12M, might be through the historic preservation process, but there isn't any concrete information about start dates. Finally, the replacement of the aging cantilever on Clara Barton Parkway is stalled because of a lack of funding.

The Mayor noted that the Town's annual Holiday Brunch was a success. She'll pass on to Mr. Omelette that the line for food was oriented the wrong way. She gave a special shout out to resident Angela Hirsch, who has been making the gingerbread houses for the brunch for the past decade.



Two plows had trouble dealing with the icy snow left from our day-long January 25 storm.

THE ECHO

Distributed free to Glen Echo residents. Subscriptions for non-residents: \$12 per year (to subscribe call the Town Manager). Copies of *The Echo* are on file at Little Falls Library. Also provided online at www.glenecho.gov. Total circulation: 190.

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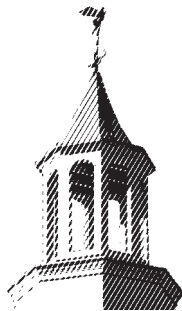
DISTRIBUTION Janice Henderson, Maire Hewitt, Aaron Hirsch, Cathie and Willem Polak

CIRCULATION Julie Lull

Next Deadline: February 20, 2026

Letters to the editor are welcome. They must be signed.

Articles for publication are also solicited. Please send comments about *The Echo* to the editor, the Mayor, or any Council Member. Volunteer reporters are always needed.



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TOWN MANAGER

Susan Theis (townhall@glenecho.gov)

Next Council Meeting: February 9, 2026, 7:30 PM

She is passing the graham cracker and frosting mantle to residents Maureen Linke and Bray Hill for next year. Mayor Costello also raised the idea that Town Hall host some movie nights for local kids. Mr. Spealman, aka The Cinemaniac, said he'd be happy to help. He also reported that the funds for the MLK Day service project at Town Hall had been raised.

Mr. Stiglitz asked some questions about the monthly fees charged by PNC Bank. In the end, he and Ms. Theis agreed to go to the bank branch for some clarity and to push for lower fees lest we take our business elsewhere.

Negotiations with the U.S. Postal Service for their new rental lease will begin in spring and be finalized by the end of the year. The Mayor shared that the branch's postmaster told her that this branch does more business than the others in the area, most likely due to the easy parking.

Compost Program

After the mostly positive response from the recent composting survey, the Town looks poised to offer this as a service. The questions that remain are which provider will be used—Compost Crew, which several residents already use, or Monster Organic—and whether the Town will pay for all or part



of the service. This will be a pilot program, so the duration is also being debated.

Mayor Costello said that she was open to trying to negotiate the fees down during the process of selecting the vendor. Ms. Theis said that the programs are really flexible, so the Town just needs to select a provider and tell them what we want, regarding who pays what.

Most on the Council liked the idea of residents paying for the bins as buy-in and then having the Town pay for the service. But Council Member Wilson wondered if paying for the bins (\$20) would keep some residents away when the purpose of the pilot is to encourage or otherwise introduce residents to composting (which Ms. Wilson noted is quite mainstream in some places—"All of London composts!"). It should be noted that Monster provides free bins and washes them out after emptying. Mr. Stiglitz was the most skeptical of the Town paying for the service outright, calling composting

“boutique-y” and questioning the fairness of paying for a service that only some residents participate in. Others on Council pointed out that residents aren’t required to recycle or ride on the bike paths, but those amenities are available to them (and paid for by their taxes).

No matter the outcome of the details, the chosen compost company will be asked to come to Town to educate residents on the service and stimulate interest. Residents with an opinion are encouraged to contact the Mayor and Council.

Tree Ordinance

Mr. Spealman reworked the latest draft of the tree ordinance, so the other Council Members were reacting and determining next steps. In this draft, the dimensions for trees subject to consideration for a permit are larger: 30 inches around at 30 inches off the ground. The assumption is that nearly all tree removal permits will be granted, but in this new ordinance,

the Mayor and Council will have the right to not grant the permit.

Many on Council are open to the statement of conservation and common good that such an ordinance would make. Mr. Stiglitz described this as the philosophical split—should the Town be able to tell residents what they can do with trees on their property. He wasn’t ready to answer that question, but the reworked draft will be sent to the Town lawyer Ron Bolt to be crafted into a new ordinance for discussion. Mr. Stiglitz said once it was completed, Council Members could amend it as desired before passing, if passing.

Odds and Ends

Ms. Theis is exploring a service (\$10/month) which would allow the Town to text emergency alerts to residents. This would be an opt-in service. Mayor Costello said that she’d been contacted by someone asking about the Town’s short-term rental (Airbnb) regulations.

TOWN SMS SERVICE

The Town is looking to initiate a SMS service for important, limited, time-sensitive notifications (i.e. street snow removal updates, emergency utility repairs, event reminders) to supplement email communication. If interested, please provide updated cell numbers to the Town Manager. Residents will receive a link in an autogenerated message via Constant Contact to “opt in” to the service. Residents can opt out once the text service begins. Please note, the Town will not be sending out marketing or promotional materials through this service.

There aren’t any, but Ms. Theis will look into what the County rules are.

It’s budget time! The Mayor and Council will begin meeting next month to discuss budgeting priorities for the next fiscal year, which begins July 1, 2026. The work session, which residents may attend to observe, will be February 11 from 7–9PM.

Town Permits

A permit for a fence at 5 Vassar Circle has been approved, and a fence permit for 43 Wellesley Circle is

pending. The construction at 7370 MacArthur Boulevard is expected to be completed by early February.

Town Expenses

In December, the Town paid \$3,653 to Key Sanitation, \$2,920 to resident JoAnne Murray (specs for Town Hall fire doors), \$2,500 to Lee’s Tree Service (Town tree pruning), \$1,356 to LSWG (two months’ work), \$1,275 to Masters Electrical Construction (updates in Town Hall), \$1,200 to Marcelli Cleaning, and \$1,071 to Mr. Omelette Catering. —EMILY PARSONS



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IN YOUR BACKYARD

In the depths of winter, trees are perhaps at their least charismatic, and certainly their hardest to identify. As I continue to build my skills at winter botany, I sometimes try to discern tree identities by touch: the white, flakey bark of a sycamore, the blocky “alligator-skin” of a persimmon, or the deep, dark grooves of a tulip poplar.

Bark is a fine clue to who is who, but my favorite way to navigate the winter woods is to look at the buds. All new growth on a tree is compacted inside its buds. Late summer—think of those hot, humid, dank days of late August—is when many trees produce next year’s buds. Leaves fall, and buds appear from behind the foliage. Then, exposed, they lie dormant for months, long before any creeping sign of spring appears. In March, they’ll explode, shoot, and sprout, but for now, they rest.

Every tree species’ bud is completely unique. Some are wispy points, angular and slim; some are spheres. Some are soft, even fuzzy, some are smooth, some are scaly. A few are pink, some are yellow, some are green; many are a deceptively dull brown. Perhaps they are not quite as arresting as the flower blossoms they hold, but there’s a quiet dynamism

inside—you just have to look.

Spicebush is one of the most common understory shrubs in Town—indeed almost everywhere along the Potomac. Their buds are shaped like small suns. Scratch along the stem, or pluck off a couple of these yellow globes, and you can smell the Mediterranean in Maryland. The scent of spicebush is complex: cypress, fresh pine, orange zest, and black pepper. In late winter, a week or so before the buds open into flower, I harvest a handful of stems for tea, which is a glorious treat to stave off the winter blues.

Beech trees make the most elegant buds of the winter woods—long, slender, and sharply pointed (see photo), resembling polished spears. Scaled and perfectly symmetrical, they project from the twigs at distinct angles. Because young beeches often retain their papery, tan leaves all winter—a phenomenon called *marches-cence*—the golden buds often hide among the rustling foliage, waiting patiently for the first true warmth of spring to expand into fresh leaves.

I don’t remember who told me that pawpaw buds are the exact shape and texture of a mouse ear. Now, I cannot help but see winter pawpaws as “mouse trees,” and it is hard to not



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want to touch every one of these round, velvety buds. In spring, these buds will swell and split, green petals will spill out and become a dark burgundy, almost black flower. I thumb over the fuzz in February and think of April's flowers and the fruit of September.

There is a profound mys-

tery in these little knobs and darts. We often walk past them, seeing only "dead" sticks, yet they are the physical manifestation of hope, wild possibilities held in check by the frost, waiting for the precise moment to explode with new life. —CHARLOTTE TAYLOR FRYAR

HOUNDS ABOUT TOWN

This month's column features a sensitive bacon-loving boxer mix named **Mac**. While owner Julia Wilson describes him as caring and "affectionate," Mac has a mischievous side. If you have noticed the Wilsons gardening at night, it's because Mac digs up new plants in the family garden. Mac, adopted from a rescue at six weeks old, is named after "a bridge in northern Michigan called Mackinac Bridge," where he spends his summers. While Mac has many canine friends, he has a special fondness for the workers at The Irish Inn who "give him bacon when he walks by." Mac's perfect day would



start off with a lazy morning, sleeping in and eating a nice breakfast. This would be followed by a hike in the woods, maybe even stopping by persimmon trees in the park as "he loves eating the persimmons that have fallen onto the ground." Next, he would have fun running around with Willow, one of his best friends. After all that action he would recharge with lunch and a restful evening, eating dinner and sleeping on the couch with his family. At his size, Mac is a gentle giant: While he may be scared of cats, he is very protective of smaller dogs. "He wants to keep them safe," says Wilson. —LIAM DOBSON

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NEW TO TOWN

The Maccoby-Hubbard family moved into their new home on Wellesley Circle in December but have been regulars in Glen Echo for many years. Both Ida, now 14, and Martin, 11, went through Bannockburn Nursery School and Bannockburn Elementary. Through those years, they became close friends with



the Parsons-Amdur and Hirsch (hi!) families and grew to love Glen Echo's small town feel and pedestrian safety. That's a feature their previous home lacked, along with a third bedroom for their expanded family.

Their search for more space coincided with the Clune family's decision to sell their home of many years, 43 Wellesley Circle. While the planning and construction process was lengthy, they are thrilled to be in their new home, near friends, and in Glen Echo at last!

Max and Ashlie met as undergraduates at the University of Chicago, where

they were friends and roommates. They fell out of touch for a decade—Max went to law school in Syracuse; Ashlie got her library science degree in New York. Max moved to Chicago, then back to his hometown of DC; Ashlie, a native of Cincinnati, moved from New York to L.A., where she worked as a librarian at the Getty Center.

Around 2008, Max reached out to Ashlie on LinkedIn. He didn't just add her to his professional network: they fell in love, and she joined him in DC in 2010.

Max works as an attorney in private practice. Ashlie's library degree served her well as the long-time co-chair with

Emily Parsons of the Bannockburn Elementary Book Fair; she is now a regular volunteer at the Pyle Middle School library.

Ida is a freshman at Whitman, where she has gotten involved in Whitman Drama both on tech and onstage for the upcoming musical. Martin is a Pyle sixth grader and is happy to be scootering around Glen Echo. Sharing their home are dog Archie and three cats.

They are grateful for the warm welcome from neighbors, and for their patience through the long construction process. —ANGELA HIRSCH

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'Doggone Dependable Since 1898'

It's the cinephile Superbowl season, with the Oscar nominations just released, and the Academy Awards taking place March 15 at 7 PM on ABC and Hulu. I'm lucky to have been able to catch all of the Best Picture nominees just in time for publication, so here's my rundown of the contenders, in order from my favorite to my least.

Sinners: It's always gratifying when the movie you like the best gets the most Academy attention. Far and away my favorite this year, *Sinners*, from writer/director Ryan Coogler, outpaced the field when it came to nominations with a record-setting 16. It's also heartening that it's such an original, inventive, and thought-provoking film. If you just want a good vampire thriller, it delivers that for sure. But the movie also transcends the boundaries of a genre movie to serve as a reflection on race, class, desire, corruption, and the deep



roots of culture. Its score and songs are hauntingly beautiful. The performances definitely earned the three acting nominations the movie received, and

those performances could also garner it a win in this year's newest Oscar category: Casting. If you only have room in your schedule for one best picture nominee, this is the one I'd urge you to see. (Streaming on AmazonPrime and HBO Max, and rentable on the usual online platforms.)



One Battle After Another: In a year without *Sinners*, this would have been your Best Picture front-runner, and it still might eke out an upset, given how topical it is. Writer/director Paul Thomas Anderson has pulled off a (practically literal) roller-coaster ride of a film—at the same time funny, fraught, shambolic, tense, and thrilling. Leonardo DiCaprio, nominated for Best Actor, must revisit his extremist past to rescue his kidnapped daughter from the domineering authorities. He's helped along the way by Benecio Del Toro, nominated for his chipper

THE CINEMANIAC



OSCAR ROUNDUP

performance, and hindered by Sean Penn, nominated for his aggressive performance. This film also has a lot to say about race, as well as human connection, authoritarianism, and cycles of violence. If it's not going to be *Sinners'* night, then it'll be *One Battle After Another's*. And given his long run of quality films, I'd be satisfied to see Paul Thomas Anderson get some acknowledgment. (Streaming on HBO Max and rentable.)



Hamnet: Based on the beloved book, Chloé Zhao has written and directed a patient and lush film about the impact of the death of a child on Shakespeare's family. Jessie Buckley gives a soulful, wise performance as Agnes Shakespeare and is almost a shoo-in for Best Actress. The movie is worth watching for her performance alone, but the whole production is moving and heartfelt. It's not streaming yet, unfortunately, but if you hurry, you can still catch it at the Avalon.

Sentimental Value: Like



Hamnet, *Sentimental Value* is helmed expertly by a confident, nominated director (Joachim Trier in this case) and anchored by the brilliant performance of its leading lady (Renate Reinsve, nominated for Best Actress). The film also deals thoughtfully with loss, depression, and difficult family dynamics. But it's set in modern Norway, as a father (Stellan Skarsgård in a brilliant, nominated performance) tries to reconcile with his daughter through movie-making. (Rentable.)

Train Dreams: Also nominated for its impressive cinematography, the movie is beautifully filmed and has



a lovely, moving soundtrack. It seems somehow both epic and intimate at the same time. The film spans the quiet life of a lonely logger in the early part of the 20th century, who ponders the changing world around him

as he takes solace in love, struggles with loss, and is haunted by the indiscriminate cruelties of the world. (Streaming on Netflix.)



Marty Supreme

Marty Supreme: It's sometimes difficult to watch Timothée Chalamet's driven, nominated performance as the titular character striving for fame and fortune in the world of 1950s international ping pong. He's skilled at the sport, true, but also skilled at the con, and he doesn't seem to care who gets hurt as he pushes his luck to the breaking point in order to face the World Champion. Does he learn any lessons along the way? You'll have to judge for yourself. (Still in theaters like Landmark Bethesda and AMC Montgomery.)



Frankenstein

Frankenstein: It's fun to watch Oscar Isaac chew up the scenery as the not-so-

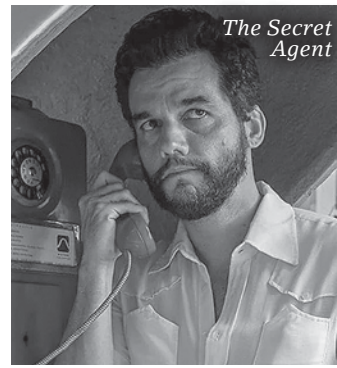
good Dr. Frankenstein, and Jacob Elordi deserves his nomination for breathing life into a misunderstood monster driven to vengeance. The film is a solid retelling of the classic tale. But overall, it's most impressive (and was primarily nominated) for the distinct and stylized way it looks, receiving nods for Cinematography, Production Design, Costumes, Hair and Makeup. (Streaming on Netflix.)



Bugonia

Bugonia: Most of director Yorgos Lanthimos's movies are admirably compelling, stylish and experimental. But he can't keep himself from going over the top into flights of fancy that take you (or at least me) out of the story. With great lead performances from Emma Stone (nominated) and Jesse Plemons (surprisingly not), *Bugonia* looked like it could have been Lanthimos' chance to pull off a gritty, grounded thriller that keeps you guessing, even after the movie ends. But instead, it meanders too much into the silly and the surreal in a way that undermines the whole project. (Streaming on Peacock and rentable.)

The Secret Agent: For



The Secret Agent

the second year in a row, we're reminded of the perils of authoritarianism by a film that explores the dangers and darkness of the 1970s Brazilian dictatorship. While I prefer the quiet realism of last year's *I'm Still Here*, there's much to appreciate about this year's entry. In both cases, the films were nominated for Best Picture, for Best Foreign Language Film, and for the dignified, nuanced performance of their lead. This year it's Wagner Moura who has to contend with the corruption and arbitrary cruelty of the military regime as he tries to protect his family. The film is suffused with gorgeous color, loving connection, and the quiet dignity of its impressive cast. But I found the framing mechanism, while symbolically important, to be ultimately unsatisfying. (Still in theaters like the AFI and Landmark Bethesda.)

F1: This is a perfectly fine, well executed action movie, but one has to wonder how it snuck its way into the Best Picture ranks. Sure, the editing, sound, and special effects are exhilarating (I drove home having to remind my-

self to slow down), and the movie deserves its nominations in those categories. But the story is pretty rote, and it has nothing broader to say.



F1

Regardless, it's a good popcorn flick, so if you're in the mood for some old-fashioned, roaring action you can stream it on AppleTV.

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The Avalon: Quality theaters like the Avalon are now scrambling to get Oscar-nominated films on their calendar, so keep an eye out for one-offs and short runs. The Avalon already has the nominated documentary, *Cutting Through Rocks*, scheduled for February 4. It's about a fierce, feminist, motorcycle-riding local councilwoman in Iran (which makes me wonder which of our own Town's fierce councilwomen are most likely to hop on a Harley). And on February 18 at the Avalon, you can catch a curious French girl experiencing the magic of nature in *Little Amélie or the Character of Rain*, which is up for Best Animated Feature. All of the Oscar Shorts are expected to start there, as well, on February 20.

—DAN SPEALMAN

Join your neighbors in a celebration of the season at the annual **Winterlude!** Gather on February 28 (rain date March 1) from 5–9 PM outside the Town Hall on Harvard Avenue. We will have a potluck (please feel free to bring an easy dish), hotdogs, smores, hot chocolate, and mac and cheese (though it is BYOB). We'll also have plenty of music, firepits, luminaries, lights, and friends to help keep you warm, inside and out. As usual, this event is to raise money for supplies for the nearby Greentree Family Shelter in Bethesda. If you'd like to contribute, \$5 will purchase one of the 200 luminaries we need to line Harvard. Council Member **Dan Spealman** will make sure the



contributions get to Greentree. Checks and cash are welcome. PayPal at paypal.me/dspeal; or Venmo using @Dan-Spealman. Text Dan with any questions at 202-560-2237.

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Glen Echo's chef/baker **Cristina Bermu-**

HAVE YOU HEARD?



dez is offering a new weekly "bake drop" — e.g. three types of banana bread. You can sign up to receive her weekly menus at www.oldtwist.com, place an order, and pick up at her Wellesley Circle home on Saturdays.

.....
More than two dozen neighbors met at

Town Hall on January 19 for our **annual service project for MLK Day**. In about 30 minutes—a new record—this group made 200 lunches for the Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless. Thanks to the volunteers, residents who donated money, and the Event Squad who plans this special event.

OUR TOWN PARK

Glen Echo Park continues to hum with activity. Our Fall/Winter education session is wrapping up with record-setting participation. This spring and summer, we'll introduce new classes and seven additional camps for youth and adults, with registration opening in early February. In the galleries, the Holiday Art Show welcomed more than 250 visitors and generated the highest sales in the show's history, spotlighting the extraordinary talent of 90 local art-

ists. Three new exhibitions featuring women artists will open later this month.

Dance and public events continue to bring energy to the Park year-round. Winter's Eve drew nearly 800 neighbors for performances, crafts, and seasonal cheer, and our social dances are seeing steady growth. We're also proud to launch Dance for Parkinson's Disease, a free weekly class made possible through private donations. It's another example of how Glen Echo Park serves the whole community.

Behind the scenes, im-

portant facilities work is moving forward. We're preparing for roof repairs in the Arcade building, advancing planning for parking lot rehabilitation, and continuing close coordination with the National Park Service on long-term projects, including the Spanish Ballroom renovations.

Finally, I want to extend special thanks to all neighbors in the Town of Glen Echo, whose extraordinary participation helped make this year's End of Year Campaign success possible. This year's effort raised

25 percent more than last year with support from over 500 donors. Our Town was named one of two Neighborhood Challenge winners out of 15 participating neighborhoods. To celebrate, we'll be joining fellow winner Bannockburn for a joint Day in the Park later this year. Details are forthcoming, but the spirit behind this win is already clear: Glen Echo may be small, but it is undeniably mighty. Your generosity and engagement continue to shape the future of this Park we all cherish. —**MONA KISHORE**

Please join us for these free informative programs that will be held in the Glen Echo Town Hall.



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24 AT 7 PM

SAVING TREES AND NATURE AROUND GLEN ECHO

By Tree Friends United, Carl Gunther & Jon Nowick

Come find out about common invasive plants that are overwhelming and destroying trees and native habitat around our community and what you can do about it. Tree Friends United, a local grassroots citizens action group, will educate you about the challenges we face and the progress of individuals and groups to restore our ecosystem.

Tree Friends United is a group of over 250 citizens centered in the Glen Echo area who are concerned with the accelerating spread of invasive species overwhelming Montgomery County's parklands, roads, and neighborhoods. As volunteers, we assist the National Park Service, the County, and residents in removing invasive vines that are smothering trees and the plants that are destroying native ecosystems. As advocates, we are allied with other groups to seek broader public awareness of the problem, achieve better funding, and establish coordinated action to counter invasives.




TUESDAY, MARCH 10 AT 7 PM

BEAUTIFUL NATIVE PLANTS FOR OUR GARDENS

By Holly Shimizu

As we learn about the huge benefits of native plants for attracting birds and all kinds of beneficial wildlife, it has become increasingly important to plant native plants and think about our gardens as part of our surrounding environment. Fantastic work by Doug Tallamy with his Homegrown National Park Organization and Margaret Roach's writings in *The New York Times*, and many others, nature-based gardening is currently the trend. We know the time is now!

Holly Shimizu is a nationally recognized horticulturist, a former Executive Director of the U.S. Botanic Garden, and a resident of Glen Echo.



They Say it's Your BIRTHDAY!

Feb. 2, **Luisa Garcia Arean**, 9
 Feb. 3, **Jasper Gillberg**, 3
 Feb. 4, **Siena Belinkie**, 12
 Feb. 5, **Grant Ellis**, 7
 Feb. 15, **Rafe Parsons Amdur**, 14

GOINGS ON

Town Hall Events

February 4, 11, 18, 26 8-10:30 PM, FSGW English Country Dance, Wednesdays, free to Town residents

February 11 7-9 PM, Council's budget work session, open to residents to observe

February 24 7 PM Saving Trees and Nature Around Glen Echo, presented by Tree Friends United

February 28 5-9 PM, Winterlude, a celebration of lights and charity fundraiser

Local Events

February 1 10 AM-3 PM, Blood Drive at Clara Barton Center

February 6 7-9 PM, Family Bingo Night, Clara Barton Community Center



Glen Echo Park Events

February 7 10 AM, 45-minute, ranger-led Civil Rights Tour starting at the carousel, free

February 7 11:30 AM and 2 PM, Screening: *Ain't No Back to a Merry-Go-Round*, Ballroom Back Room, free

February 5, 12, 19, 26 11 AM, kids story time at the Aquarium

February 14 9:30 AM, Four-mile ranger guided history hike starting at the Carousel

The Puppet Co. www.thepuppetco.org; 301-634-5380

The Enchanted Mermaid February 7-March 1

Tiny Tots select Weds, Sats, and Sundays at 10 AM

Adventure Theater MTC

www.adventuretheater-mtc.org; 301-634-2270

Freckleface Strawberry The Musical

February 13-March 29



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, AT 7:00 PM

LADIES NIGHT

26 WELLESLEY CIRCLE • MARTHA SHANNON HOSTING

I live, *work*, and
have grown my
family here.



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