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Glen Echo Park Partnership Announces Request for Stories from the Public as part of Carousel 100th Anniversary Celebration

Glen Echo, Maryland – The Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts and Culture will commemorate the 100th anniversary of Glen Echo Park’s beloved Dentzel carousel with a months-long celebration, including virtual lectures on the history and restoration of the carousel, summer family weekend activities, social media contests, carousel anniversary merchandise, a fundraising campaign, and the premieres of three short films that will feature personal stories reflecting the unique and enduring role the carousel has played in the community for a century.

In a joint project with Story Tapestries, a nonprofit arts service organization that specializes in empowering people’s voices through digital storytelling and other art forms, the two organizations will collect information from the public throughout the month of February. According to Katey Boerner, Executive Director of the Partnership, the Park has “heard countless stories over many decades from carousel riders of all ages, and now we would like to collect and record these memories – these pieces of history – to preserve them for decades to come. We know there are generations of park-goers who have ridden the carousel with their families and friends – stories of World War II, civil rights protests, the turbulent 1960s, and the fifty years since the Park became a National Park Service property and an arts and cultural center – and we invite everyone to share their memories with us.”

A form will be made public on the Glen Echo Park website on February 2, and the public is invited to describe their most memorable moment on the carousel. While only a handful of the stories collected will end up in the films described above, many of the stories will be shared in other ways throughout the carousel celebration, and all the stories will be preserved. A link to the form may be found at <https://glenechopark.org/carousel100>.

Installed in Glen Echo Park in 1921 and now the property of the National Park Service, the carousel has been described as “one of the Washington area’s true treasures.” The ride was built by the premiere carousel company of its day: the Dentzel Carousel Company of Germantown, Pennsylvania. Dentzel carousels of the 1920s represented the height of carousel design, known for their elegantly carved and painted animals and their precision-crafted mechanisms. The carousel is one of only 135 functioning antique carousels in the country and one of the few still in its original location. With its playful animals and striking ornamentation, the carousel has been an iconic symbol of the Park throughout the site’s amusement park years and into its current phase as an arts and cultural center.

The carousel was saved through actions of the local community when threatened with a sale to another park in the early 1970s and is a local treasure loved by many in the Washington, DC area. The carousel is also the site of civil rights protests that took place in the 1960s during the era of the privately-owned amusement park.

A full restoration of the decorative elements of the carousel was conducted from 1983 through 2003, paid for with funds from Montgomery County, the State of Maryland, and the federal government through the National Park Service; in addition, a \$23 million renovation of other Glen Echo Park facilities was completed in the mid

2000s. Recent major repairs, paid for by the National Park Service, the State of Maryland through the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority, and Montgomery County, include replacing the roof of the carousel building, replacing the outdated fire suppression system, and rebuilding the band organ room, which houses the Wurlitzer band organ. These much-needed repairs will now keep the carousel safely protected for many years to come.

Today, Glen Echo Park is one of the premiere arts and cultural centers in the Washington, DC area, and the carousel is the only ride that remains in the park from the amusement park era, which ended in 1968. It has a ridership of close to 55,000 each year and normally operates from May through September each year. Due to Covid-19, the carousel did not operate in 2020. The Partnership hopes to be able to celebrate the 100th anniversary with carousel rides this year, dependent upon COVID restrictions imposed by the State of Maryland and/or Montgomery County. If permitted, the ride will open on May 1, 2021.

The Carousel 100th Anniversary Celebration activities are paid for with funds provided by the state of Maryland through the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority and funds from private donors. Additionally, the Dentzel Carousel at Glen Echo Park has been awarded the Heritage Award from the State of Maryland in the “Place” category, which comes with \$5,000 in funding for the celebratory events.

More information about the Carousel 100th Anniversary Celebration, which will include activities and events from mid-February through September 2021 will be announced on February 18, in a live launch event.

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Note to editors: High-resolution images of the carousel, including several historic images are available.



ABOUT GLEN ECHO PARK AND THE GLEN ECHO PARK PARTNERSHIP

Glen Echo Park is a vibrant arts and cultural center presenting festivals, exhibitions, and dances, as well as children’s theater, music programs, nature programs, and art classes to more than 375,000 visitors each year. The Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts and Culture, a nonprofit organization, oversees these and other activities, including preserving the historic structures in the Park. Glen Echo Park, part of the National Park Service, is located in Glen Echo, Maryland, six miles northwest of Georgetown along the scenic Potomac River palisades.

The Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts and Culture is supported in part by the Maryland State Arts Council (msac.org) and also by funding from the Montgomery County government and the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County (creativemoco.com). All programs are produced in cooperation with the National

Park Service and Montgomery County, Maryland.

ABOUT STORY TAPESTRIES

Story Tapestries is a leading arts service organization that increases accessibility and equity in educational and community spaces through: professional performances in storytelling, theater, dance, spoken word and other art forms in a variety of public spaces; workshops and in-depth training programs to build students of all ages’ ability to use the performing, visual, and literary arts to develop their voices, share their stories and increase their literacy, social-emotional and STEAM skills; and collaborations with other service-providing organizations as a means to spark open community dialogue that promotes social justice and inclusivity and shifts the power dynamic, breaking down the barriers that apparently divide us to connect with our humanity and bring light to our likenesses. Their vision is to make the arts, in all its forms, a part of daily life for every person.

Since becoming a 501c3 in 2010, Story Tapestries has reached more than 840,000 individuals by collaborating with over 1,300 organizations. In 2019 alone they presented 133 performances and taught 1,025 workshops. Their motto “Empower. Educate. Engage.” guides Story Tapestries to create collaborative arts programs that cater to communities’ needs through free or affordable performing arts events and workshops for families, children, community leaders, artists and educators. They collaborate with local arts and humanities organizations and nonprofit partners to design sustainable, multi-year, arts-focused programs with support from individual donors, foundations, and government entities.