



## Glen Echo Park Celebrates Opening Weekend of Historic Carousel with Carousel Day Festival, featuring free performance by SOLE Defined and 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Wurlitzer Band Organ

*Carousel Rides, Free Performances & Kids Arts & Crafts, Food Trucks, and More!*

For more information, email [jcloud@glenechopark.org](mailto:jcloud@glenechopark.org).

GLEN ECHO, MD (April 13, 2026) – **Carousel Day**, an annual tradition at Glen Echo Park and one of the Park’s most popular festivals, will be held this year on Saturday, May 2, from 11am to 4pm. In addition to free performances, Carousel Day features art projects for kids, open art studios and galleries, a parade through Park grounds led by resident performers, and more. Carousel Day is presented by the Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts and Culture (the Partnership) and often attracts up to 4,000 people who come to the Park to celebrate the opening of the historic, 105-year-old Dentzel carousel for the season.

This year, a special milestone will also be celebrated. For a century, music from the carousel’s historic Wurlitzer 165 band organ has echoed through the Park and across Montgomery County—a soundtrack to generations and a witness to ten decades of local and American history. Now the Park is marking the instrument’s milestone year, alongside America’s 250th anniversary.

The Partnership’s 2026 season embraces this moment with the theme ***The Power of Place***, weaving the “A250” celebration throughout a vibrant lineup of events that all begin at Carousel Day. Free performances highlight music and dance from the African diaspora, honoring their enduring influence on American culture. The carousel’s role in local history—not just as a centerpiece of the Park, but as a site connected to the Washington, DC, civil rights movement—will also take the spotlight.

Headlining Carousel Day is **SOLE Defined**, a dance company pushing the boundaries of African Diasporic Percussive Dance, specifically Tap Dance, Body Percussion, and Sand Dance. Led by 2024 Guggenheim Choreography Fellow Ryan K. Johnson and International Art-based Teaching Artist Quynn L. Johnson, SOLE Defined metamorphosizes percussive dance by transforming the dancers’ bodies into human drums, creating immersive performances and innovative arts education programs.

“In honor of A250, we are excited to present music and dance styles that represent the significant influence of African American dance and music on American culture. It’s so important to acknowledge and honor the cultural movements and influences of the past as we celebrate our nation’s history,” said Katey Boerner, Partnership CEO.

With SOLE Defined headlining, additional performances include: Soul In Motion Players, sharing the rich traditions of West African drum and dance; The Eric Byrd Trio, bringing the spirit of swing, bebop, gospel, and the blues; and Clarence Turner, who will live up to his nickname, “The Blues Man,” when he takes the stage. National Hand Dance Association will present a DC Hand Dance performance with Kevin Fitzhugh and Shroeder Noble, as well as youth hand dancers from the Roots Public Charter School, followed by an audience hand dance lesson. Elements Dance Company will showcase their Hip Hop Dance and Street Dance Training Program, with dancers ages 8-18. Instructor Janee Murray will lead a Soul Line Dancing workshop, previewing her popular DanceFit: Line Dancing class which returns to the Park Saturday mornings in May & June.

Carousel Day will kick off with an opening parade led by Glen Echo Park resident organization Washington Revels, followed by a Maypole dance and a Mummers Play. For a special treat in celebration of the Wurlitzer band organ’s 100th anniversary, Organ Grinders Paul Senger and Terry Bender will play their street organs throughout the day.



Art-making projects for kids will include screen printing, carousel animal fans, Dentzel carousel crowns, a Create-Your-Own-Carousel craft, aluminum printmaking, and more! And on display in the Partnership Galleries will be three exhibitions: *Collaborations in Clay 2026* in the Park's Popcorn Gallery, *On Behalf of New Myths / En Nombre de Nuevos Mitos* in the Stone Tower Gallery, and *Botanical Whimsy: Patterns in Bloom* in the Park View Gallery. Other resident visual arts studios and galleries in the Park will also be open for art viewing and sales. Visitors can also check out art demonstrations and activities throughout the Park by Resident Artists, including glass blowing demonstrations by Glen Echo Glassworks, Cyanotype Printing & Painting and Petals & Portraits activities with Photoworks, a handbuilding activity with Glen Echo Pottery, and a pop-up exhibition & art demos with Yellow Barn Studio instructors.

Of course, the day would not be complete without **the star of the Park—the 105-year-old Dentzel carousel and its 100-year-old Wurlitzer Band organ.** [Carousel rides](#) are \$2.00 per ride or \$5.00 for an all-day ticket.

In between performances and arts activities, visitors can watch screenings of documentary short films by Wide Angle Youth Media for the Maryland State Arts Council. These short films document traditions in Maryland through Folklife Apprenticeships and Heritage Awards.

Carousel Day is sponsored in part by the [Nora Roberts Foundation](#).

Food options for visitors include Praline Cafe and Money Muscle BBQ food truck, as well as cold treats from Ben & Jerry's and Pacha Mama Juice Co.

Also happening at Glen Echo Park on Carousel Day:

Carousel Day visitors interested in learning more about how the Dentzel carousel played a role in the Civil Rights protests to desegregate Glen Echo Amusement Park can start their visit early with a ranger-led Glen Echo Park Civil Rights and History Tour. Families can also [book a visit](#) to the Glen Echo Park Aquarium, or attend a children's theater show. [Tickets are on sale now](#) for Adventure Theatre MTC's production of *Aesop's Fables* and *The Forest of the Witch*, presented by US Karagoz Theatre Company at the Puppet Co. Visitors looking to extend their day at the Park are welcome back for an evening concert by Nowhere Men, a Beatles tribute band, with The Wildflower Frequency opening the set. The concert will take place in the Spanish Ballroom, with room for dancing.

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*High resolution images and carousel b-roll available by emailing [jcloud@glenechopark.org](mailto:jcloud@glenechopark.org).*

## **About the Dentzel Carousel**

Installed in 1921 by the Dentzel Carousel Company of Germantown, Pennsylvania, the Glen Echo Park carousel is one of only 135 functioning antique carousels in the country and one of the few still in its original location. Listed on the **National Register of Historic Places**, the carousel is truly a Washington area treasure! Known as a "menagerie carousel" because of the variety of its animals, the Glen Echo Park carousel includes 52 animals: 40 horses, 4 rabbits, 4 ostriches, 1 giraffe, 1 deer, 1 lion and 1 tiger. It also features two circus chariots. 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 for the past half-century.

In the summer of 1960, Howard University students led protests at the Park along with local residents. The students rode the carousel and were arrested for doing so in violation of the privately-owned amusement park's segregation policies. The case went all the way to the United States Supreme Court. Their continued protests under the heat of the summer sun – and the active engagement of community members in the fight – led to the



amusement park's desegregation, opening the venue to everyone for its 1961 season and every year thereafter until the amusement park closed after the 1968 season.

Today, the carousel is the **only remaining historic ride from the amusement park era at Glen Echo Park site**. It is ridden by more than 50,000 people each year – including multi-generations of families visiting the Park. In 2021, the carousel celebrated its 100th Anniversary in the Park. Find information on the Carousel 100th Anniversary Celebration at [glenechopark.org/carousel100](https://glenechopark.org/carousel100).

## **About Glen Echo Park and the Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts and Culture**

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 close to 300,000 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. For more information on Glen Echo Park, visit [glenechopark.org](https://glenechopark.org) or follow us on [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).

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