



PUBLISHED SINCE 1948 FOR THE TOWN OF GLEN ECHO, MARYLAND ~ CHARTERED IN 1904 ~ JANUARY 2021

## TOWN COUNCIL NOTES

The entire Council, Mayor Polak, Town Manager Beth Boa, Town lawyer Ron Bolt, and a couple of residents were present on the Council meeting zoom call on December 14.

### Upcoming Election

The Town will be holding an election in May for the Mayor and two Council seats—the terms of Council Members Spealman and Stiglitz are up. The Board of Elections Supervisor is Jan Shaut, and she was at the meeting to discuss details with the Council. Mr. Bolt briefed everyone on the “emergency election protocols” passed by the state last year. Some municipalities opted for no in-person voting and in an abundance of caution even hired second parties to count the votes. Council Member Costello, seconded by Ms. Shaut, pointed out that the size of our Town has kept our elections casual: You walk into Town Hall, confirm resi-

dency if needed, mark your ballot, put it in the box, grab a Hershey’s Kiss, and chat with your neighbors. The Council agreed in the end that moving the voting outdoors and requiring current safety protocols (whatever they may be in May 2021), like distance and mask requirements, would suffice with the caveat that any resident who does not wish to vote in person could request an absentee ballot, an option that has been available in past elections. For all the elections details, see page 5.

### Streetlights

Ms. Costello led the discussion on the Town’s eventual switch to LED streetlights. As reported in last month’s *Echo*, Pepco is planning

this switch, and either they will do it or towns can do it themselves and lock in at a lower rate. According to Ms. Costello, there are myriad reasons to let Pepco handle the switch themselves.

These range from rapidly changing technology and ongoing maintenance to a lack of clear options and Pepco’s unwillingness to disclose the lower rate at this time. Because a cost-benefit analysis can’t be completed and even a timeframe is elusive, the Council felt it was best to wait and see with the intention of letting Pepco handle replacement and maintenance, though this doesn’t mean the Council is ceding style decisions to Pepco. This was also the advice of a lighting consultant who has been working

with other municipalities. The anecdotal experience of other towns was another compelling factor. One installed several options and then upon selecting one, found that they were no longer being produced. And another that opted to replace and maintain their LED streetlights had to buy enough overstock for future replacements and find a warehouse to house them. Ms. Costello said no changes were imminent.

### New Permit Conditions

Mayor Polak presented Resolution 20-07 at the meeting. It calls for a statement of standard permit conditions and construction site protocols be attached to all permits issued. The Mayor said that the reason for this was that he and Ms. Boa are spending an inordinate amount



# THE ECHO

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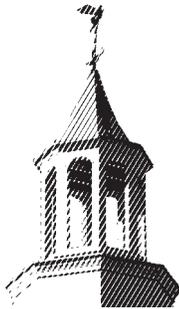
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Letters to the editor are welcome. They must be signed. Articles for publication are also solicited. Please send comments about *The Echo* to the editor, the Mayor, or any Council Member. Volunteer reporters are always needed.



## TOWN OF GLEN ECHO

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### TOWN MANAGER

Beth Boa ([townhall@glenecho.org](mailto:townhall@glenecho.org))

Next (Virtual) Council Meeting: Jan. 11, 2021, 7 PM

of time policing construction sites to ensure that the Town's streets are kept safe and clean for residents. If the protocols are part of the permit, then contractors will know up front what is expected and the Mayor and Ms. Boa will be able to issue a stop-work order if the permit requirements aren't being met.

Mr. Spealman came with a list of issues, and the discussion of them was the bulk of the meeting. He began by asking where the language in the protocols came from and commented that they should get more time in front of residents for feedback before being adopted. The protocols came from what is already required by the Town and from what other towns do and with input from Town engineer Joe Toomey. They became public when Ms. Boa sent out the Council meeting agenda three days prior to the meeting and can be read on the Town's website.

The Council began with

street cleaning, which has been an issue of late. The language in the protocol requires daily sweeping but says hosing "if necessary." In cases like this, what is necessary is left to the discretion of the Mayor and Ms. Boa, which can open the Town up to inconsistent implementation. Mr. Stiglitz: Obviously, piled-up mud is bad, but what about dirt that will wash away in the next rain? Mr. Spealman: Would neighbors complaining be a trigger? Council Member Wilson: Should sweeping and hosing both be required to make it standard? Mayor Polak: Clumps of dirt on the street must be swept; more gravel and straw on site can help; if that's not enough, then hosing will be requested. Bottom line, if a site isn't complying with requested corrections, then the Town can issue or threaten to issue a stop-work order to compel compliance, and they can't say they didn't know because it is all stipulated in the protocols attached to their permit.



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The protocols say “sanitation facilities must be provided on site.” Mr. Spealman asked if these protocols were to be attached to all permits, even for smaller projects. The Council agreed to edit the language to say that facilities only need to be provided if there are no working facilities on the property, so if you are putting in a new driveway, workers can use the bathroom in your house.

Using the example that flaggers could be required by the Mayor and Ms. Boa to direct traffic, Mr. Spealman questioned whether this protocol document held many possibilities for overreach. The Mayor said that the document didn’t require them in all instances and that he needed that leeway to keep our Town running smoothly—for example, a flagger will be required when an oak tree is removed from Vassar Circle at the end of December as cars will need to be directed the wrong way on the circle. Mr. Stiglitz said that the document can be updated with more limits if it is deemed necessary at a later date.

When Mr. Spealman expressed concern about the effort it will take to monitor all of these requirements, like if trucks are following the correct routes, the Mayor again said that this will give him and Ms. Boa the power to put pressure on

the builders. So, if they see something, they can threaten a stop-work order for a permit violation. The Council also agreed that a permit consultant wasn’t necessary for taking pictures of the “before” right-of-way conditions when determining if no new damage has been done—the applicant can be required to provide them as part of the permit process. Finally, Mr. Spealman asked that the language that violations “shall be subject to a fine” be changed to “may be subject to a fine.”

The Mayor asked if the Council could vote to pass with the discussed changes made, but Mr. Spealman said he’d like to see the new draft and for residents to have more time to read the proposed protocols. The goal is to approve the resolution at the January 11 meeting.

### **Quiet Skies Coalition**

Resident Cathie Polak asked the Council to consider a donation to the Montgomery County Quiet Skies Coalition, which led to a much larger discussion about whether the Council should be in the business of making donations on behalf of the Town at all. Ms. Costello and Ms. Wilson were initially in favor of the donation, but Mr. Stiglitz was decidedly opposed, which is consistent with his position generally when the question of giving arises. He

added that the Council had recently worked with the Mayor to cut any fluff out of the budget in response to residents’ calls for thrift during this uncertain time. Mr. Spealman seconded that it was very difficult for the Council to be in the position of picking and choosing causes. Resident Thom Amdur commented that when in the past the Council denied making donations to other worthy



causes—like the struggling aquarium or the Adventure Theatre post-fire—it was left to residents to make gifts as desired, and that this precedent should be followed out of fairness. He added that the Town listserv is an obvious place for residents to raise awareness about local philanthropy.

Ms. Wilson was persuaded that the Council should not approve a donation to Quiet Skies. Ms. Costello argued that for consistency’s sake the Town should re-evaluate its annual donation to the Glen Echo Park Partnership, but also delved into the idea that the Town could budget for some amount of giving each year that organizations could then apply for. She plans to research how other towns handle requests for donations.

### **Odds and Ends**

There were two budget amendments: one due to the expense of repainting the back outdoor stairs at Town Hall; and one due to the added expense for a traffic consultant when working out the incorrect street signs installed around Vassar Circle. Ms. Boa reported that the Irish Inn has asked if she would send out promotional emails to the Town through Constant Contact. The Council said no. Mr. Stiglitz noted that residents on Vassar Circle are still consistently parking on the sidewalks. This habit, formed prior to the road widening, is no longer necessary. Ms. Boa told the Council that the old trolley trestle out past Radcliffe Lane is slated to be taken down in the fall of 2021.

### **Police Report**

Following two recent robberies at the Glen Echo Pharmacy, Mr. Stiglitz spoke with Commander Gagen. He reported that there will be more patrols in the area. Burglaries are up everywhere, and our best defense is locking our homes and cars (and keeping valuables out of sight). Mr. Stiglitz also noted that large concrete barriers are being installed along MacArthur Boulevard up by the Billy Goat Trail to keep people from parking illegally—and dangerously for pedestrians. —EMILY PARSONS



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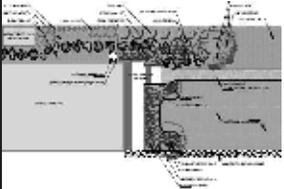
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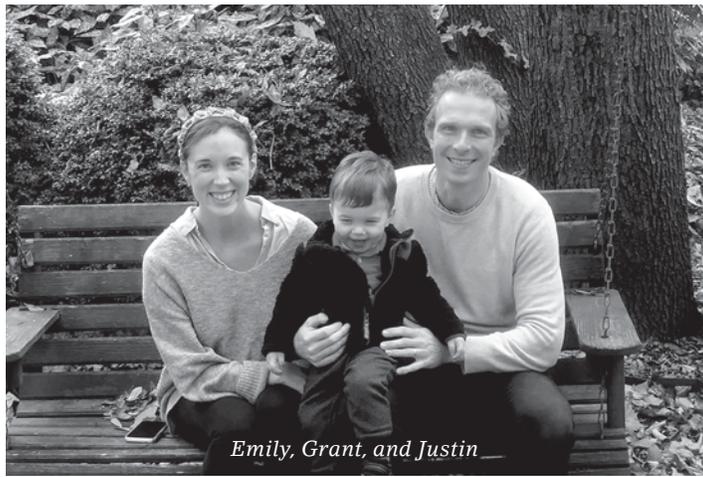
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The property on 6005 Princeton Avenue seemed too good to be true: cottage charm, a big yard (by Glen Echo standards), and that unbelievable treehouse (the handiwork of onetime owner and builder-about-town Matt McFarland). Justin and Emily Ellis feared the property came with a hidden flaw when they noticed that it was listed for sale for the third time in just a few years.

But thanks to some research in back issues of *The Echo*, Justin connected with another former owner—and now neighbor—who assured him that the flurry of sales had everything to do with individual owners' circumstances and not any problem with the property itself. The Ellises—with two-year-old Grant and a baby sister due in February—are now settling in and getting to know their new neighborhood.

Both Emily and Justin have navigated change in their work since the start of the pandemic. Justin is the managing director of finance for KIPP DC, a community of charter schools in the District of Columbia that serves nearly 7,000 students across 18 schools. This year, KIPP made the change to online learning—a particular challenge for KIPP's student body of many low-income families, including a sizable population of homeless kids. The

## NEW TO TOWN



Emily, Grant, and Justin

school was able to provide Chromebooks and Wi-Fi connections for all students, as well as meals and mental health care to mitigate the many challenges their families continue to face.

Emily is a manager for Lyft, the ride-hailing company that had become a constant in many Wash-

ingtonians' daily life, pre-lockdown. With a dramatic drop in commuting and leisure riders, Lyft has pivoted to partnering with businesses and local governments to provide rides to essential workers seeking an alternative to public transportation. Lyft's network of e-bikes and scooters has boomed

as riders seek socially distanced transportation alternatives.

The couple met at Elon University and remain close with their friend group from college, many of whom now live in D.C. Justin and Emily are interested in good food and drink and, like many of us, are now indulging in these interests largely at home. Luckily, Emily describes Justin as a talented cook and mixologist. In D.C., they frequented Union Market, and they are making note of Montgomery County's gourmet and ethnic shops for cooking projects.

Grant is a fan of Glen Echo's playground, and they are looking forward to connecting with other families with little kids in town—as well as prospective babysitters. —ANGELA HIRSCH

## TOWN ELECTION UPDATE

**O**n May 3, 2021, the Town of Glen Echo will hold an **election for Mayor and two Council seats**. This is a great opportunity to get involved in the community. The terms are four years. If you are interested in running for any of these open roles, you must be at least 25 years old, a resident of the Town of Glen Echo for at least one year, and a registered voter in the Town. You do not need to

be a U.S. citizen. Anyone who would like to run for these offices must file a written declaration of candidacy by April 13, which is 20 days prior to the election. Candidacy letters should be delivered to Jan Shaut, Supervisor, Board of Elections, 6004 Harvard Avenue, Glen Echo, MD 20812.

Given the current Covid considerations, the election is expected to be

held outdoors with safety measures in place. Details will be available closer to the election. Residents 18 years and older may vote, and you can register when you come to vote—proof of residency may be requested. Absentee ballots will be provided to anyone who requests one. To request an absentee ballot contact me at JShaut@gmail.

com prior to the election.

—JAN SHAUT





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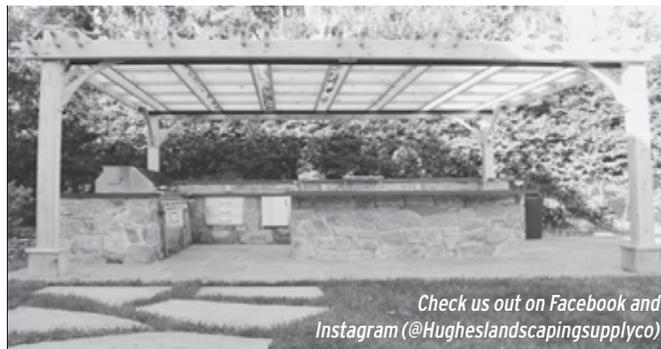


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I love winter mulches for many reasons, which I will get to. However, there are some current mulch types and practices that are not only ugly, but dangerous and unsustainable.

Both dyed mulch and rubber mulch are hideous. You might see these used at fast food joints that hire uninspired, low-bid landscapers to do their artificial-looking landscapes. Dyed mulch is sometimes made from old pallets, decks or containers that have been treated with chromated copper arsenate (CCA), once used as a wood preservative. This mulch can be unsafe for humans, soil, plants, and animals. The use of CCA was banned in 2002 but old woods continue to be used. Today, to be certain it is safe, dyed mulch should be certified by the Mulch and Soil Council. Rubber mulch is made from recycled tires. This material is toxic due to the chemicals that leach from the tires. These include heavy metals and a host of hazardous chemicals which are dangerous to both humans and the environment. To me, it is unnatural having shredded rubber mulch in a garden.

My number one choice for a winter mulch is shredded dry leaves gathered from the garden. One reason to shred the leaves is that they are more attractive and will break down easily, thus becoming an

## HOLLY IN THE IVY



🦋 **DO** consider mixing shredded hardwood bark and small bark nuggets for a mulch. It is attractive and can be used on slopes helping prevent erosion.

🦋 If your plants like drier soils (plants such as lavender, thyme, and rosemary) try using small pea gravel or chicken grit (sharp granite pieces) as a mulch.

🦋 Pine needles are excellent for woodland gardens and areas where acid-loving plants (such as azaleas) are growing.

🦋 Cocoa hulls are a great mulch, plus they give off chocolate fragrance, but beware, they can be poisonous to cats and dogs and can blow in the wind.

🦋 Use good compost as a mulch as long as it does not have weed seeds in it.

.....

🦋 **DON'T** use more than a 3-inch layer of mulch, 1-3 inches is recommended.

🦋 Mulch should never be up against the trunks of trees, keep it at least 3 inches away from a trunk.

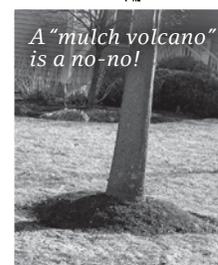
🦋 Never make mulch volcanos around trees; these are created when woodchip mulch is piled high and thick around a tree trunk giving it the look of a volcano. The area around trees should be at ground level.

🦋 Avoid placing mulch right on the crown (growing points) of perennials.

🦋 Keep soil bare in areas where you want seeds to germinate.

🦋 Fresh wood chips do not make a good mulch because they take nitrogen from the soil as they are breaking down. Once composted, they are fine.

🦋 Long-term use of hardwood mulch can cause manganese and other elements to build up to toxic levels.



important nutrient source for the plants. I like to wait until the plants are dormant and then apply around 2 to 3 inches of my mulch around the garden. This mulching acts like a soil blanket as it helps insulate the roots and protect them from drastic temperature changes. A good organic mulch enhances soil quality as it gradually turns into a rich humus. Humus will help soil tilth as well as provide nutrients along with beneficial microbes. Mulch can assist in preventing weed seeds from germinating as well as holding in moisture during dry periods.

Small bark nuggets or small wood chips are also excellent mulches because they add soil nutrition as they break down. The most attractive and finest hardwood mulch is triple-shredded bark. Single shredded has long strands, around 9 inches, and looks coarse. Double-shredded mulch, the most frequently used, has 4- to 6-inch strands. Using a variety of mulches is a good idea and can depend on what is available and affordable.

Mulch will give your garden a finishing touch along with providing a host of other benefits. Working in the garden in winter will provide a great head start for your spring gardening chores. —**HOLLY SHIMIZU**

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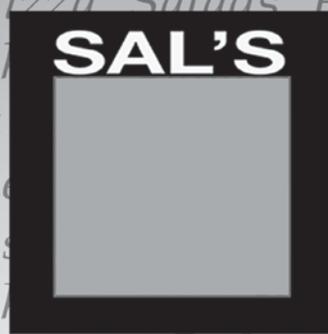
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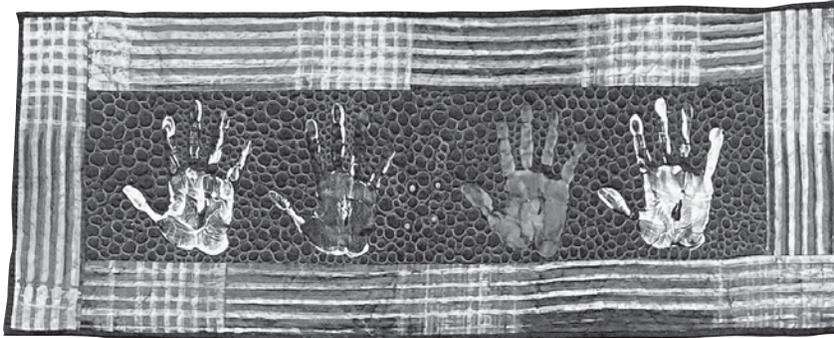
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# OUT AND ABOUT

For many of us, the start of 2021 is a call for a new dawn: A year to see our world healed, healthier and with hope for a better future. While the idea of normalcy is something we all want to return to, we're not likely to get there just yet. But the good news is that our surroundings have adapted, and many places have stayed open or re-opened with new guidelines that welcome patrons—even in these colder months.

If you're looking for a change of scenery, consider the **DC Waterfront in Georgetown**. Most res-



"Blood on Your Hands" by Sandra Ealy, courtesy of the Sandy Spring Museum

taurants overlooking the Potomac have retrofitted their outdoor patio areas into individually reserved heated tents and tables with limited capacity. Or, venture to **The Wharf** where a massive fire pit and retro Airstream trailer await for the ultimate glamping simu-

lation, serving up sticks and marshmallows to toast and piping-hot apple cider.

The new year also often brings with it many new year's resolutions. For those looking to shed the "Covid 19," many nearby gyms are taking social distancing seriously with open-air

studios and bootcamps, such as at **202 Strong** which provides outdoor options across all locations, including North Bethesda.

For all those quilters among us or, like me, those aspiring to be, starting January 8, you can make a reservation at a stunning new exhibit called **Quilts and the Stories They Tell** at Sandy Spring Museum. A range of skills will be on display, all presenting stories told through stitchwork that are both emotionally and physically warming. —MONA KISHORE

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## OUR TOWN PARK

The Dentzel Carousel will receive the Maryland Heritage Award in 2021. Our Carousel is being recognized by the state of Maryland for its long-term importance as a gathering point for community fellowship and demonstrating continuing vitality due to the efforts of groups or individuals whose work stretched over many generations. Awards are given annually through the Maryland Traditions state folklife program. The Park is so pleased to end 2020 on a high note. After a successful renovation of the Carousel, recovery from its unfortunate



vandalism, and being closed due to the Covid-19 shutdown, we are happy to receive this honor and the \$5,000 grant that accompanies it. As 2021 is the centennial year of the Carousel, we look forward to more ways to honor and celebrate this important treasure. Many members of the Town of Glen Echo contributed to saving and restoring the Carousel over the years. The Park Partnership is planning a series of fun events, exhibitions, and educational programs for this coming year along with a grand reopening. Like Carousels? Check out the online art

market website for a special hand-made carousel-themed face mask. It's sure to be a collector's item!

StayConnected on our website features lots of virtual options for programs and classes. Two of our most well-known arts programs continue to offer ways to showcase artists. Consider entering your 2020 street photos for a special online show Hindsight 2020, pro-

duced by Photoworks. The deadline is January 15. So much has occurred on the streets this past year. The show opens in late January and should be a great way to reflect on those highlights. Photoworks also offers a free monthly Cocktails and Critique session and a variety of classes. Another important online exhibition is the Yellow Barn juried exhibition on view until March 1. This is their 26th year to highlight the best of the Yellow Barn artists. National Gallery of Art curator Harry Cooper served as the juror this year. —**MARTHA SHANNON**



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## GLEN ECHO HARDWARE

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Thank you to our residents for their generous gifts to assist the families in transitional housing through S.O.M.E. (**So Others Might Eat**). In partnership with the communities of Cabin John and Brookmont, we provided SOME with over \$17,000 in gift cards and donations. SOME has expressed its deep appreciation for these gifts during this particularly difficult and painful year for their families. Special thanks also to residents **Patty Sieber** and **Julia Wilson** for facilitating.

An update on a past resident: **Michael Bobbitt** formerly of Wellesley Circle left his post as director of Adventure Theatre a couple of years ago and moved to Massachusetts where he became director of the New Repertory Theatre in Watertown. Now he moves on from there to be the executive director of the Mass Cultural Council, thereby becoming the most senior cultural official in the Commonwealth.

**Holly Shimizu** (see Holly in the Ivy on page 7) has written and illustrated a children's book about two frogs looking for a safe place to live. It was published by **Debbie Lange's** company Bethesda Communications Group and is



available on Amazon. Look for *Figgy and Fiona Search for a Home*, and we're guessing you could get the author to sign it!

One of our cherished holiday traditions went on as planned this year: the **Glen Echo Fire Department's Santa Run**. On the evening of December 17, a procession of emergency vehicles and a lit-up Santa in a convertible blared through town to the delight of Glen Echo's children. Thanks also to resident **Gloria Levin** who keeps us abreast of the schedule and always works to get us a primetime spot. You can support the fire

department at [www.gefd.org](http://www.gefd.org) or leave goods in one of the used clothing bins in the area that benefits them.

The hours at **Glen Echo Park**, shortened during the early pandemic, are back to 6 AM to 1 AM. However, the Park is moni-

tored by private security starting at 5 PM, and guards will make sure guests are not entering certain excluded areas like the pavilions and Crystal Pool. This is in response to increased vandalism and evidence that people are going into restricted areas.

### Real Estate

6000 Bryn Mawr Avenue, listed at \$1,029,000, is under contract. Happily, owners **Dan Spealman** and **Kristi Maasjo**, with kids **Corrina** and **Declan**, aren't moving far—just up the street in fact! They are buying 7325 University Avenue, while its owner **Susan Grigsby**

is moving to nearby Summer Village (joining other former residents the **McGunnigles**). Susan says she is delighted that the Spealmans are buying her house, where she has lived for 30 years. The soon-to-be built home at 10 Vassar Circle is now listed at \$1,499,000.

## HAVE YOU HEARD?



**NEED HELP DIGGING OUT?** These snow-shoveling neighbors await your call or text:



**Alejandra Bermudez**, Wellesley Circle, 202-531-1501

**William DeSilva**, Harvard Avenue, 301-885-9004

**Aaron Kraus**, Princeton Avenue, 202-286-6026

**Zach Kraus**, Princeton Avenue, 202-286-6508

**Colin Koonce**, Columbia Road, 202-286-9439

**Nolan Koonce**, Columbia Road, 202-975-3464

**Jon William McCaffrey**, Harvard Avenue, 202-486-3059



## They Say it's Your BIRTHDAY!

- January 12, **Nolan Koonce**, 14
- January 13, **David Chused**, 9
- January 13, **Elsbeth Chused**, 9
- January 15, **Niklas Gillberg**, 8
- January 15, **Reed Jensen**, 8
- January 15, **Riya Kishore**, 5
- January 23, **Conrad Hirsch**, 12

# Coming Soon!



## 10, 14, & 20 VASSAR CIRCLE, three more distinct homes in Glen Echo, Maryland

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- Second home office addition
- Luminous living spaces throughout
- One-car garage and off-street parking with Pinterest-worthy mudroom entrance
- Spacious master suite with marble double shower, double walk-in closets, and treetop views
- Two additional upper bedrooms and second floor laundry room
- Light-filled lower level rec room, bedroom and bath
- Bonus room for storage, home office, or gym

**Prices starting at \$1,499,000**



10 VASSAR CIRCLE



14 VASSAR CIRCLE



20 VASSAR CIRCLE



**SOLD!**

4 VASSAR CIRCLE

**LAND DEVELOPMENT AND SALES:** Kingman Development. Aaron Hirsch, Principal. An award-winning developer and Glen Echo resident with 20 years of experience in residential property development, design, and construction management.



**ARCHITECTURE:** Claude C. Lapp Architects, an award-winning firm with more than 35 years in the business.

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