

Willow Grove Cultural Commons Quarterly Stewardship Report

January - March 2026



Willow Grove Cultural Commons Partners

Sandy Spring Museum continues to recruit Willow Grove partner organizations. These cultural heritage groups and individual practitioners become museum members and are able to reserve Willow Grove at their convenience. They enter via keypad codes, which allow them to rehearse and gather at the Grove according to their own schedules. Partners also receive training on Willow Grove's sound system, so they can use it on their own as they wish. The museum's newest Willow Grove partners include:

- **Cultura Plenera**
Puerto Rican bomba y plena music
- **Orfeia**
Bulgarian music
- **rob Hinkal**
Live Instrumental Jam Session
- **Opancici Serbian Cultural Center**
Serbian dance
- **Yeeve Rayne**
Performance art inspired by artist's Korean ancestral heritage
- **Susan Milner**
Folk music



Sandy Spring Museum Bluegrass Jam in Willow Grove



Members of Los Hijo 'e Plena rehearse in Willow Grove to prepare for the Puerto Rico in Maryland Festival on May 30



Willow Grove Activity



During the first quarter of 2026, Willow Grove was used by partners for more than 20 rehearsals and ten public events attended by 250+ audience members. Artists and groups conducting rehearsals included the Pounleu Duong Chan Moonlight Ensemble, AmaZing Theatre, Spyros Koliavasilis, Los Hijo 'e Plena, Yeeve Rayne, and others. Sandy Spring Bluegrass Jam used Willow Grove as a breakout area for small groups during its monthly jam sessions in January and February and as its main space during March. The Helen Nesbitt and Arthur Douglas Farquhar Creative Space and Naomi Yadin-Mendick and David Mendick Gathering Space were both fully utilized during the winter months.



Spyros Koliavasilis instructs students of all ages in Willow Grove



Spotlight on Public Events

In early February, District of Raga (an arts group that works to preserve and promote South Asian performing arts) hosted the Deepak Ram Trio for a concert. Indian bansuri (bamboo flute) artist Deepak Ram, an Olney local, performed with a tabla percussionist and standing bass player. The result was an innovative blend of soothing bansuri music and contemporary jazz. District of Raga will return in May with the Snehesh Nag Trio.

The AmaZing Theatre Company, which rehearses in the Grove, presented “Driven by My Ancestors: A Griot’s Journey through African American Folklore” on two winter Sundays. Griot (storyteller) Gordon “Soorah” Parks gave his family-friendly presentation to enthusiastic audiences, including many Sandy Spring Museum members.

On March 15, Korean-American Artist Yeeve 이재인 Rayne, a new Grove partner, presented “The Sun & Moon Making Love: A Storytelling Ritual Performance to Connect to the Soul of Korea”* at the museum. This performance was the first installment of her “Timeless Stories for the End of Time,” a series of original works inspired by pansori, an ancient Korean storytelling art form rooted in shamanism that merges movement, song, and spoken word. *English spelling of country’s name before Japanese colonization.



Soorah Parks performing at the museum

The first of three LUPA Talks Sana Circle was held in Willow Grove on March 21. Led by Dr. Xiomara E. Rivera Pagán, the series delves into connections between language, identity, and belonging. Participants actively discussed how different ideas about language and identity in light of the Puerto Rican diaspora influenced their Spanish learning. Dr. Pagán is also a founding board member of Cultura Plenera.



Upcoming Attractions



We look forward to using Willow Grove and the Warner Williams Plaza at this year’s Strawberry Festival on Saturday, June 6. The blossoms in the Sandy Spring Museum Garden Club planter will be in full bloom. The amphitheater played a key role in the 2025 festival and, with construction complete, Willow Grove will contribute even more to the festivities in 2026!

In addition to the festival, the Grove will host new programs this spring, including the Songwriters’ Showcase and Rooted & Rising: Asian American and Pacific Islander Stories in Celebration of Maryland 250.