



Love is in the Air!

MDSC Event Recap

Mary Lynn Lally, Thelma Schroeder, Lisa Skaggs, Contributors

A total of 112 people (members, KIS staff, volunteers, and visitors) gathered at the Marilyn J. Praisner Community Center in Burtonsville on Friday, February 20, 2026, despite the wet weather, hugging one another and exclaiming, “Good to see you!”, “Long time no see!”, “What a long winter!”, “So cold!”, and “I lived like a cocoon!” It took some time for President Thelma Schroeder to get everyone’s attention — we were all so busy chatting! Finally, she began the announcements:

- MDSC now has 182 regular and supporting members.
- A recent meeting with the Center addressed the need for a platform to improve accessibility for Deaf and DeafBlind members. Thelma was the first to arrive and was pleasantly surprised to see the new platform with steps. The installers asked her to direct them on where to place it so all members could clearly see the speakers. They also kindly offered to help arrange tables and chairs alongside the volunteers, and their assistance in getting the room ready was greatly appreciated.

In Memoriam

- Thelma shared the sad news that Carolyn Stockwell Perry, a former MDSC member, passed away earlier today (February 20, 2026). Sylvia Winifred Hackley, an MDSC member and the mother of Theodore Hackley, passed away on February 8, 2026. Anderson Marlow, the brother of MDSC member Kathrine Hom, also passed away on January 20, 2026. Wai Ying Louie’s sister-in-law passed away recently. A moment of silence was observed in honor of the deceased individuals.
- Please inform Thelma if you know of any members or former members who have passed away, or if any members are seriously ill. MDSC wants to remain supportive of those who may need assistance.

Upcoming Meetings

- Friday, March 13, April 17, and May 15: Marilyn J. Praisner Community Center
- Tuesday, June 16: The Meeting House in Columbia (Annual Membership Meeting)

March 25 Day Trip

Mike Weinstock, Trip Coordinator, shared details about the upcoming trip to Fort McHenry and the Baltimore National Aquarium, followed by lunch at Crepe Crazy, a Deaf-owned, family-operated business founded in 2007 by Vladimir and Inna Giterman. The Baltimore location is operated by franchisee Ruslan Kulikov. A flyer has been sent to members.

- Meet at the Park & Ride - East Lot, 9602 Broken Land Parkway, Columbia at 8:15 am
- Cost: \$35 per person
- Limited space — register early!

Bylaws Update

Laura Sweeney, Bylaws Chair, provided updates regarding the bylaws.

- Members have 60 days prior to the Annual Membership Meeting to submit proposed amendments. Voting on amendments will take place at the Annual Membership Meeting in June.

Guest Presentation

Stay Steady, Stay Strong: Tips for Deaf and DeafBlind Seniors—presented by Vanessa Arp, Dr. Carol Riddick, and Tra’Shauna Tate from Gallaudet University.

The presentation focused on balance and fall prevention. Research shows:

- Individuals with hearing loss have a 30% higher risk of falling.
- Fall risk has increased by 53% over the past 10 years.

Environmental Risk Factors

- Poor lighting
- Cluttered, uneven, wet, or slippery floors
- Lack of handrails or grab bars
- Unstable furniture
- Improper footwear (watch for worn treads)

Behavioral Risk Factors

- Sedentary lifestyle
- Poor nutrition or dehydration
- Risky behaviors (rushing, standing on chairs, etc.)
- Fear of falling

- Alcohol use or medication mismanagement
- Improper use of glasses or hearing aids

Intrinsic Risk Factors

- Advanced age
- Previous falls
- Chronic conditions (stroke, Parkinson's, diabetes, heart disease)
- Deafness

Prevention Tips: Home safety checks, regular medical care, and exercise.

Many members, visitors, and volunteers participated in about 40 minutes of exercises, followed by a lively game of beach volleyball!

Lunch

Boxed lunches from Panera Bread were served, including a choice of sandwich or salad, along with a cookie and potato chips. Delicious!

Advocacy Update

Gina Oliva emphasized the importance of supporting LEAD-K SB 502 and HB 879, which would establish a Language Acquisition Tracking Program for children ages 0–8. The bills are scheduled to be heard on Wednesday, February 26 (Senate) and Thursday, February 27 (House) in Annapolis. For more information, visit the [Maryland LEAD-K website](#).

BINGO

Two rounds of BINGO were played:

- First game winner: Yvonne Catt (\$69)
- Second game winners: Eve Mitton, Mike Olson, Rick Thompson (\$16 each)

January and February Birthday Song

Mary Lynn Lally led the celebration by signing the birthday song for January and February members, using different regional birthday signs.

Best February-Inspired Attire

- 1st Place: Pauline Spanbauer (\$25)
- 2nd Place: Kitty Fogarty (\$15)
- 3rd Place: Cathy Thompson (\$10)

Guessing Jar

Donna Ballmer guessed 40 pieces (actual total: 44) and won two jars of Ghirardelli candy!

50/50 Raffle

Winner: Kay Burrhus (\$208)

Bank Day

A name was selected for \$50, but the winner was not present. Next month's Bank Day prize increases to \$100.

Special Thanks

Admissions: Yvonne Catt, Laura Sweeney

50/50 Raffle: Cathy Thompson

Food & Beverages: Ann Cole, Christine Sorkin, Katie Todd

Guessing Jar: Ann Hirsch

Interpreters & KIS Staff: Jimmy Beldon, Rebecca Blumenfeld, Ingrid Conley Weidner, JAC Cook, Meredith DeSomma, Eric Hamlow, Senette Jilson, Maria Solovey, NancyLynn Ward, Delanne Woodall, Julie Perry, Niki Warman

Pictures: Andriana Canning, Thelma Schroeder, Lisa Skaggs

Presentation: Vanessa Arp, Dr. Carol Riddick, Tra'Shauna Tate

Recap: Mary Lynn Lally, Thelma Schroeder, Lisa Skaggs

Volunteers: Samuel Bradley, Ilan Brick, Corinne Emanuel, Megan Kules, Katie Parker, Morgan Ramos, Carley Saster, Lisa Skaggs

Heartfelt thanks to everyone who came out and helped make this day full of fun and great memories!

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Scroll down to see photos taken by Andriana Canning, Thelma Schroeder, and Lisa Skaggs:













