



### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Federal Theatre Multimedia Event in June

Greenbelt, MD, June 13, 2018—Chris Cherry of the Greenbelt Recreation Department, has done extensive research on the Federal Theatre Project. On June 23 and 24, Cherry will host *The Federal Theatre and Greenbelt*—an 80th anniversary multimedia event at the Greenbelt Community Center (15 Crescent Road) that recounts the highlights of the WPA's Federal Theatre Project and its connection to Greenbelt. The program will include a narration and slideshow, song performances, and a presentation of the one-act play by Betty Smith, *What Are You Going to Be?* Smith would go on to write *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*.

The show features lively scenes and songs created during Greenbelt's first years by the Federal Theatre Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The program is co-sponsored by the Greenbelt Museum and Greenbelt Recreation, with a cast of 24 talented performers. Cherry writes:

"It was the Works Progress Administration's four-year program to provide work for actors and other theater workers during the Great Depression. The WPA became, for a time, the biggest theatrical producer in history. Still funny, touching, and pointed, the Federal Theatre shows shine a spotlight on the challenges of 1930s America – and on the creativity, energy, and determination that Franklin D. Roosevelt and his administration unleashed in the New Deal."

The centerpiece of the program will be the performance of Betty Smith's *What Are You Going To Be?*, exactly 80 years after it was presented by Greenbelt's first theatre group, the Greenbelt Players. In 1938, the Players could not foresee that the play would be an essential step in the development of Smith's masterpiece, *A Tree Grows In Brooklyn*. Smith, who was an unknown and struggling writer at the time, used the play as a first sketch of the characters for her later, bestselling novel. Rediscovered in the Federal Theatre archives at the Library of Congress, the one-act play will come to life again in the same auditorium in which it was presented 80 years ago. Marilyn Maryn Spiegel, the sole surviving member of the 1938 Greenbelt cast, has accepted an invitation to attend the show as a special guest.

Show times for *The Federal Theatre and Greenbelt* are 7:00 pm on Saturday, June 23, and 3:00 pm on Sunday, June 24. In addition to the Smith play, we will present songs and sketches from the hit Federal Theatre musical, *Sing For Your Supper*; excerpts from a humorous murder mystery that toured the CCC camps; and a selection from the project's famous Living Newspaper, *One-Third Of A Nation*.

Research for this program also unearthed the original musical manuscript for a famous, but long-lost WPA song "Leaning On A Shovel," which will be performed for the first time in decades. Please come celebrate this entertaining piece of musical history with us!

A permanent exhibit in the east alcove of the Community Center that commemorates this history has been planned that will display poster art examples from Federal Theatre productions, along with photo and newspaper excerpts. The exhibit opening and accompanying reception has been postponed until a later time. Please check for more details in the future.

Tickets for *The Federal Theatre and Greenbelt* can be purchased from the Community Center business office at 301-397-2208 for \$5. Early purchase is advised.

The program and exhibit are co-sponsored by the Greenbelt Recreation Department and the Greenbelt Museum.

### **ABOUT THE GREENBELT MUSEUM**

Greenbelt, Maryland is a National Historic Landmark planned community built in 1937 as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. Greenbelt was designed as a cooperative garden suburb that would be a model of modern town planning in America. The Greenbelt Museum allows visitors to experience Greenbelt's beauty and rich history through tours of an historic home, award-winning exhibits, public lectures, educational programs for children, and walking tours of the historic town. The Greenbelt Museum's historic house is open for tours on Sundays from 1pm to 5pm except for major holidays. The Museum is open by appointment only in January. For more information, visit [greenbeltmuseum.org](http://greenbeltmuseum.org).

### **INFORMATION**

Location: *Greenbelt Museum Historic House*  
10B Crescent Road, Greenbelt, MD 20770  
*Greenbelt Community Center Exhibition Gallery*  
15 Crescent Road, Greenbelt MD 20770  
Metro: Greenbelt (green line)

Hours: *Historic House: Sundays from 1pm to 5 pm (except for major holidays)*  
*Exhibition Gallery: Mon-Fri 9am-10pm; Sundays 10am-7pm*

Contact: 301-507-6582 or [greenbeltmuseum.org](http://greenbeltmuseum.org)

Admission: \$5.00 and Under (Exhibition Gallery is Free)