

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Preservation Maryland Announces Best of Maryland Awards: Building Rehabilitations, Skilled Artisans, Museum Volunteers & Others Celebrated Across the Old Line State**

Baltimore, MD (August 25, 2020) – Preservation Maryland is honored to shine a spotlight on the tireless work of volunteers, architects, artisans, and legislators doing the essential work of protecting the places that make Maryland such a special place to live, work, explore - and celebrate.

This year's Best of Maryland awardees are being presented awards at socially distant site visits across the state this month. The public is invited to learn more about each award and to help us honor them by attending a special event at *Bengies Drive-In Movie Theater* in Middle River, Maryland on Thursday, October 1, 2020. The awards event will be followed by a screening of the 1980s classic, "The Money Pit" as a nod to the challenging and sometimes humorous nature of saving old buildings. Tickets are on sale now on Preservation Maryland's website, [www.presmd.org](http://www.presmd.org). All are welcome and proceeds support the nonprofit organization.

Preservation Maryland Executive Director Nicholas Redding explained, "History is a critical guide in uncertain times. During this ongoing health crisis, museums and historic sites have stepped up to provide historical context for today's struggles and are authentic backdrops to explore and discuss these issues." Redding continued, "Preservationists have long known that our work is essential, and that's underscored in this year's class of diverse award winners from around the state who are helping to make our communities places we're proud to call home."

William Murtagh, the first "Keeper" of America's National Register of Historic Places once wrote that, "At its best, preservation engages the past in a conversation with the present over a mutual concern for the future." In the spirit of Murtagh's forward-looking approach, Preservation Maryland proudly announces the 2020 Best of Maryland Awardees:

### **Expert House Movers President's Award Statewide**

Sharptown, Maryland-based Expert House Movers, is a national leader in structural lifting and transport. The third-generation family-owned company's portfolio includes the relocation of six lighthouses, several historic theatres, two covered bridges, an airport terminal, and countless historic residential structures of every shape and size across the country.

**Delegate Stephanie Smith**  
**City of Baltimore, District 45**  
**Legislative Champion**

Delegate Stephanie Smith of District 45 in Baltimore City was the House sponsor for the Historic Revitalization Tax Credit Improvement Act of 2020. Delegate Smith understands the transformative potential an historic tax credit project can have on a community as a whole and is a voice for revitalization in her role as Assistant Director of Equity, Engagement and Communications in Baltimore City's Department of Planning.

**Senator Katie Fry Hester**  
**Howard County, District 9**  
**Legislative Champion**

Senator Katie Fry Hester served her District 9 and all of Maryland when she sponsored a 2019 bill in Maryland General Assembly that called for a study of the preservation and reuse of the state's historic government complexes, such as Warfields Hospital and Glenn Dale Hospital – that report has since been released and is in use as a guiding document. Sen. Hester also championed legislation related to the historic tax credit and making adaptive reuse projects even more green.

**Pete Leshner**  
**Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum**  
**Town of St. Michael's**  
**Gearhart Professional Service Award**

Pete Leshner has been working full-time at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum for nearly 30 years. As Chief Curator, he develops interpretive exhibitions and public programs that highlight the Bay's maritime history and culture, including Native American life, naval history, boat building traditions, seafood harvesting, and recreation. Pete is a committed advocate in support of Maryland's museums and cultural sites and is often in Annapolis testifying or speaking passionately in support of Maryland's heritage tourism.

**James Castle**  
**Brunswick Heritage Museum**  
**City of Brunswick**  
**Harrison Volunteer Award**

A native of Brunswick, Maryland in Frederick County, James Castle is a model citizen, dedicated volunteer, skilled historian, and stalwart preservationist. In his tenure as President of the Brunswick Potomac Foundation since 2015, he has led a note-worthy fundraising effort, supported the creation of a protective conservation district and the relocation of the historic WB Railroad Tower, and reinvigorated the organization's online presence during Covid-19.

**Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Library  
Renovation & Modernization  
City of Baltimore  
Preservation Artisan Award**

Baltimore City's ca. 1933 Enoch Pratt Free Library Central Library is the flagship location of the oldest public library systems in the United States, and through the work and skills of many hands during an extraordinary renovation and modernization project, the Library shines bright as a beacon of community, knowledge, and betterment. Like the work of innumerable authors housed in the Library, the renovation project itself was the collective work of dozens of skilled artisans led by EverGreene Architectural Arts and F.G. Vogt Company to revive this Temple of Learning.

**Center for Health Care and Healthy Living at the Baltimore Hebrew Orphan Asylum  
City of Baltimore  
The Phoenix Award**

The nation's oldest standing Jewish Orphanage, a stately 1876 Romanesque Structure in Baltimore City, was once slated for demolition and suffered decades of abandonment, but thanks to the hard work of community advocates and preservation professionals, the building has been reimaged into a much-needed health care center operated by the Baltimore Health Department and Behavioral Health System Baltimore. The combination of a signature vacant building and the desperate need for medical options created a powerful opportunity for reuse of the Asylum. For achieving this awe-inspiring rehabilitation and for providing a place for Marylanders to perhaps remake themselves, this year's Phoenix Award to Coppin Heights Community Development Corporation, Baltimore Heritage, Inc., and Waldon Studio Architects.

**Kent County Cultural Landscape Assessment Report  
Kent County  
Smart Growth Excellence Award**

Kent County, Maryland's picturesque historic and natural resources were the subject of a model report which confirmed the unique and unparalleled opportunities for preservation in this eastern shore county. In recognition of the inspired and innovative undertaking, the Preliminary Cultural Landscape Assessment of Kent County, Maryland, will receive the Smart Growth Excellence Award from Preservation Maryland and Smart Growth Maryland. The project team is comprised of the Kent Conservation & Preservation Alliance, Barton Ross & Associates, McGinnis Landscape (now Kennon Williams Landscape Studio), Heritage Strategies, and Washington College Center for Environment and Society.

**CASA de Maryland  
Historic Belnord Theatre  
City of Baltimore  
Stewardship Award**

As part of a physical and programmatic expansion, CASA de Maryland, a Latino and immigration advocacy and assistance organization, bought and rehabilitated the historic Belnord Theatre. Selective demolition removed a non-historic ceiling revealing beautiful architectural details and a space large enough to create a series of modern pods for different uses – all while respecting those design elements and achieving ADA compliance and LEED Gold Certification.

**Maryland Department of General Services  
Annapolis Post Office  
City of Annapolis  
Stewardship Award**

Under the direction of the Maryland Department of General Services, one of Annapolis's historic post offices just underwent a world-class comprehensive adaptive reuse program to restore the deteriorated Georgian Revival architecture and to convert its interior space into the governor's office of community initiatives and the governor's legal office. This Best of Maryland Stewardship Award goes to the Maryland Department of General Services for envisioning and financing this iconic \$15 million project on Annapolis' Church Circle.

**Evergreen Heritage Center Foundation  
Allegany County  
Stewardship Award**

The Evergreen barn in Allegany County is believed to be the last remaining 18th-century barn in Western Maryland and was the site of a concerted preservation and reuse effort to reimagine the future of this stunning barn. Starting with a feasibility study in 2015 and major repairs in 2018, the Foundation reimaged the historic barn as an architectural museum complete with an exhibit called, "Living Off The Land," that educates over 9,000 Western Maryland school children each year.

**Washington Grove Volunteers  
Town of Washington Grove  
Community Choice Award**

When Washington Grove transitioned from a summer resort to an incorporated town, much of the rustic camp character of this special place carried on including their approach to handcrafting their street signs. Volunteers, led by Susan Van Nostrand, recently worked with the Historic Preservation Commission and the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service to make minor modifications to the original design to ensure that the town would not lose these iconic signs that provide a sense of direction - and a sense of place.

**Parsons Cemetery Advisory Committee**  
**City of Salisbury**  
**Community Choice Award**

Parsons Cemetery in Salisbury, Maryland is an historic operational cemetery, an urban green space, an outdoor museum. The six-member volunteer committee works diligently to create a site of reverence and culture by offering self-guided walking tours based on their on-going historical and genealogical research. They also maintain the 18 acres of sacred grounds and the promise of perpetual care, and lastly, a lively Facebook page with incredible and enduring stories of the interred.

**Odenton Heritage Society**  
**Anne Arundel County**  
**Community Choice Award**

Recently the all-volunteer group, led by President, Wylie Donaldson and Roger White, Curator, completed the transformation of the town's ca. 1912 Old Masonic Hall for as the Odenton Heritage Society Historical Center which serves as a local history museum, public archives, the Society's office and a community meeting place. The group is also responsible for the restoration of the handsome and hospitable stone building at the Odenton stop of the MARC train.

**Historic London Town & Gardens**  
**Anne Arundel County**  
**Community Choice Award**

Historic London Town & Gardens in Anne Arundel County is a long-established living history site tackling every day and extraordinary challenges head-on. Recently, the team led by Rod Cofield and Lauren Silberman embarked on recreating the tavern bar in the Brown House and included an LGBTQ-inclusive array of characters and experiences into their interpretation practices. Next up, they'll utilize a Maryland Heritage Area Authority grant to build a new education pavilion on their main site.

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Since 1931, Preservation Maryland has worked to protect the places, stories and communities in Maryland that matter. As a non-profit organization, it works with partners across the nation to accomplish this important mission and protect the best of Maryland. Learn more at: [presmd.org](http://presmd.org).