



## Heritage Awards 2024

### AWARDEES

**Person or People award category:** Donald Owens has been a steward of Baltimore City's African American community theater tradition since the 1970s, particularly through his work with the Arena Players, the oldest, continually-operating, historically Black community theater in the country. As the Players' artistic director since 2007, Owens passes down the tradition through community-grounded acting, directing, writing, and teaching.

**Person or People award category:** Angel Rivera of Frederick is a master of the Puerto Rican percussion and dance traditions of *bomba* and *plena*, as well as the tradition of distilling *pitorro*, or moonshine rum. Rivera founded the first and only *bomba* and *plena* ensemble in the region and the only *pitorro* distillery in the continental United States. For more than 40 years, Angel's work has strengthened the sense of community in Maryland's Puerto Rican diaspora.

**Place award category:** The Pocomoke Indian Nation continues their centuries-long relationship with the lands and waters of the Pocomoke Homelands, located on the Lower Eastern Shore in Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester counties. Referenced by English explorer John Smith in 1608 and in 17th and 18th century treaties with the English Maryland Colony, tribal members continue to live on their homelands, where they practice land and water stewardship and educate the public about their tribal history and culture.

**Tradition award category:** Founded in 1972, Carroll County's Deer Creek Fiddlers' Convention is a supportive space in which musicians, dancers, singers, and songwriters from diverse traditional music backgrounds can connect, learn from one another, and compete. Prizes are awarded for performance on various instruments and in genres including old-time, bluegrass, folk, blues, and Celtic music.

**Tradition award category:** The Emerald Isle Club of Baltimore County was formed by Irish immigrants in 1956 to keep Irish traditions alive. Through monthly *ceilis*, or dances, and other events, the club offers all Marylanders opportunities to experience Irish music, dance, language, literature, and other aspects of Irish culture.

**Tradition award category:** On Frostburg Derby Day, children race small, homemade derby cars down Main Street in Allegany County while families and local business sponsors cheer them on. Organized by the Frostburg Elks since 1977, the tradition grew from the soapbox derby craze of the 1930s and 1940s. In some families, derby racing cars have achieved the status of family heirlooms, with as many as three generations of drivers having used the same car.

### PANELISTS

Jaqueline Andrews (Baltimore County)

Mimi Dietrich (Baltimore County)

Richard Osban (Baltimore City)

Treston Sanders (Prince George's)

Monique Walker (Charles)