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State of Maryland Announces 2022 Heritage Award Winners

\$15,000 in grants recognizing long-term achievements in the traditional arts

[Maryland Traditions](#), the traditional arts program of the Maryland State Arts Council, has announced the winners of its 2022 Heritage Awards, which recognize long-term achievement in the traditional arts. Heritage Award nominations are accepted in three categories: Person or People, Place, and Tradition. Three awards, each featuring a \$5,000 grant, are given annually. This year's winners are:

- **Person or People:** Shelley Ensor (Baltimore County) is a singer, musician, and choral director revered within the central Maryland gospel music tradition. Part of a long family lineage in this worship-based tradition, Shelley has sung, performed, and directed gospel music regionally for churches and other institutions in Carroll and Baltimore counties, Baltimore City, and internationally.

- **Person or People:** Husband and wife duo Meki and JoAnn Toalepai (Anne Arundel County) are entertainers, event producers, and cultural ambassadors for Pacific Islander (PI) culture. The pair created spaces in which PI people and others continue to learn about and participate in traditional PI music and dance. These spaces include the multigenerational, family-run ensemble Meki's Tamure Polynesian Arts Group, founded in 1969, and the Pacific Fun Day Festival, founded in 1985.
- **Tradition:** The Waterfowl Festival (Talbot County) is an annual cultural event in Easton that celebrates and educates the public about waterfowling culture and conservation traditions on the Eastern Shore. Founded in 1971, the Festival is among the oldest and largest continuous events of its type, featuring decoy carving, sporting art, and the World Waterfowl Calling Contest.

Maryland Traditions has offered Heritage Awards annually since 2007 in honor of Dr. Alta Schrock, a Garrett County community leader who taught biology at Frostburg State University and founded groups, events, and publications to support traditional arts in Appalachian Maryland and beyond. Dr. Schrock's legacy and work are a continuing source of inspiration for the Heritage Awards today. As part of their honor, each winner participates in a photo shoot and recorded interview to document their activities.

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About the Maryland State Arts Council

Founded in 1967, MSAC is an agency of the State of Maryland Department of Commerce that plays an essential role, ensuring every person has access to the transformative power of the arts. MSAC advances the arts in our state by providing leadership that champions creative expression, diverse programming, equitable access, lifelong learning, and the arts as a celebrated contributor to the quality of life for all the people of Maryland. To do this, the agency awards grants to not-for-profit, tax-exempt organizations for ongoing arts programming and projects, awards grants to individual artists, and provides technical and advisory assistance to individuals and groups. MSAC receives its funds in an annual appropriation from the State of Maryland and from grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. The Council may also receive contributions from private, non-governmental sources. For more information, go to msac.org.

Photo caption: From left: Shelley Ensor performs, Meki's Tamure Polynesian Arts Group rehearses, and a decoy carving demonstration at the 2000 Waterfowl Festival. Ensor photo courtesy of Pam Zappardino/Common Ground on the Hill; Meki's Tamure Polynesian Arts Group photo by Edwin Remsberg Photographs; Waterfowl Festival photo by D. Bishop/courtesy of the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum.