



*39th Annual*

 **Harford's  
Most  
Beautiful  
People**

*Awards Ceremony*

*October 9, 2025*



Bob Cassilly, County Executive

# About our Awards

## *The Harford's Most Beautiful People Ripple Effect Award*

*Named to symbolize the exponential impact volunteering has on our community. Just like a pebble dropped into a pond, our nominees send ripples of kindness through Harford County.*

## *Harford's Most Beautiful Shining Light Award*

*Recognizes the brave volunteers who use their personal stories to shine a light of awareness on serious issues facing our County. Often the topics have deep, personal, and painful significance, yet these individuals fight stigmas and talk about difficult subjects that many would rather push into the shadows.*

## *Harford's Most Beautiful First Responder Award*

*Given to a volunteer first responder, EMS or firefighter, for committed service to the safety of the citizens of Harford County.*

## *Harford's Most Beautiful Group Award*

*Presented to a group of individuals who come together collectively and volunteer for the common good of the Harford County community.*



## ROBERT G. CASSILLY

Harford County Executive

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Welcome to the 39th annual Harford's Most Beautiful People Awards!

I am honored to thank our dedicated volunteers who give thousands of hours each year to help others. Their kindness strengthens our community and changes many lives.

The nominees we celebrate this evening volunteer to serve in many ways. They are first responders, they mentor and coach our youth, and they care for the elderly and support the homeless and families living in poverty. Our quality of life is greatly enhanced by their selflessness.

On behalf of our citizens, I hope you enjoy this event as our way of saying thank you to the volunteers who are surely among Harford's most beautiful people.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob".

Bob Cassilly  
County Executive



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## Welcome Reception and Awards Ceremony

Thursday, October 9, 2025

6:30 p.m. Reception

7:15 p.m. Welcome and Introductions

*Director of Housing & Community Services Barbara Richardson*

Musical Selection

*A Cappella Journey*

Opening Remarks

*Harford County Executive Bob Cassilly*

Presentation of Nominees

*Kristy Breslin, WMAR-TV*

Musical Selection

*A Cappella Journey*

Special Presentations

Harford's Most Beautiful People Award

8:00 p.m. Closing Remarks

*Kristy Breslin, WMAR-TV*



## Shari Bailey

*Nominated by Kara Tabor*



Shari Bailey is the founder and president of Laila's Gift, a non-profit that advocates for, supports and celebrates children with special needs and disabilities, and their families. After her twins, Lana and Laila were born, Laila was diagnosed with Jacobsen Syndrome, a chromosomal condition that causes birth defects. Laila was not expected to live beyond 2 years old. Shari decided she wanted to celebrate every milestone and created Laila's Gift. Through Laila's Gift's unique programs, children and their families are provided with a celebration box for birthdays and other milestones. Parents, siblings and caregivers receive resources to support mental health, and future collaborations are in the works with a leading pediatric cardiologist to create Cherish Every Beat, in hopes of creating better outcomes for children with Jacobsen Syndrome. Shari's dedication and determination to make life better for children and their families is a beautiful gift to the Harford County community.



## Kelly Bryant

*Nominated by Teresa Stepp*



For 10 years, Kelly Bryant has been a dedicated volunteer for the Special Olympics Law Enforcement Torch Run. For the past two years, she has led the event, managing logistics, enlisting volunteers, coordinating communication and overseeing turnout. Her organizational skills, commitment to inclusion and tireless energy have made the run a successful benefit to the Special Olympic athletes. Additionally, Kelly and her husband coached basketball and softball for the Special Olympics and have assisted those in their community with financial needs, food insecurities and emotional support. During the pandemic when in-person Santa events were halted, Kelly was part of the neighborhood Kris Kringle at Kershaw Court, where she dressed up and handed out cookies, small gifts and hot chocolate to over 1,000 visitors, allowing children to visit Santa during a period of uncertainty and isolation. Kelly's kindness and quiet generosity have had a beautiful impact on children and those with differing abilities in Harford County.



## Christine Deckard



*Nominated by Rhonda Hinch*



Christine Deckard volunteers and is an active life member with the Level Volunteer Fire Company. She obtained her EMT credentials in 1999 and is also a certified public life safety educator. Christine served as the company's vice president from 2019 to 2021 and was named the 2024 Maryland State Firefighters Association (MSFA) EMS Person of the Year. Additionally, Christine is a life member of the Ladies Auxiliary, where she served as president and on the Fire Prevention and Publicity team. Christine further serves at the state level for MSFA and the MSFA Ladies Auxiliary for their Fire Prevention and Bessie Marshall committees and as a delegate/alternate for the state convention. Christine is the University of Maryland Upper Chesapeake Medical Center Aberdeen EMS Base Station coordinator and attends the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems eMEDS steering committee meetings. Christine's service to her community makes her one of Harford's most beautiful people.



## Melissa Derisca



*Nominated by BangTam Miller*



Melissa Derisca is a committed volunteer to those in her community. She serves on the Joppatowne Community Advisory Board, is a member of the NAACP and served on the Harford County Public Schools' board for youth. Melissa is a volunteer partner with the 755 Alliance and the VFW and is an advocate for new local businesses and helps support their success. Melissa was instrumental in creating the much-needed Girl Scout Troop 443 in Edgewood, where she helps girls focus on building courage, confidence and character. She serves as a community liaison for the West Shore HOA and promotes free fun events for the community. Melissa leads her church's youth activities and food ministry and procures food for those in need. She is a beautiful force with all she does for her community.



## Jessica Fendryk

*Nominated Vicki Jones*



Jessica Fendryk volunteers with the BeSmart Gun Sense campaign and Moms Demand Action, advocating for common sense gun laws, providing information on safe gun storage and distributing gun locks at safety events and First Fridays in Havre de Grace. Jessica is the branch treasurer for the NAACP and serves as a liaison at Harford County Board of Education meetings. She has assisted with the NAACP's Celebrating the Diaspora, Freedom Fund Brunch and Juneteenth events, creating crafts, giveaways and T-shirts, often at her own expense. Jessica also participates in MLK service activities through the United Way, providing breakfast and packed snack bags for teachers and staff at Joppatowne High School. She serves as an at-large member of UPRooted Chesapeake, helping to provide information, translation services and connections for military families. Jessica's vital presence in her community makes her one of Harford's most beautiful people.



## Judy & Galib Kawaja

*Nominated by Carol Kehring*



Judy and Galib Kawaja are committed volunteers at the Church of the Resurrection, Copley Parish, in Joppa. Judy leads a prayer shawl group, knitting shawls for fellow parishioners who need extra prayer or support. The group has at times had 25 women knitting shawls,

arm sleeves for people in dialysis, lap robes, hats or dolls. Judy considers these items to be a warm hug from the group and the church. Galib provides technical assistance with AV equipment for the church's two Sunday services, recording and posting them on YouTube. As a couple, Judy and Galib created a fellowship event, the Night at the Races, which mimicked a horse race complete with a silent auction to benefit the church. They further assist with the church's Historical Fair, helping to procure artifacts for people to learn about their community. Judy and Galib's tireless efforts are a beautiful blessing to their church and community.



## Karen Lopes

*Nominated by Rhonda Hinch*



**K**aren Lopes has been a dedicated volunteer for the Level Volunteer Fire Company and its Ladies Auxiliary for over 50 years. She serves as the fire company's Secretary and is the Auxiliary's president. Karen was one of the first female firefighters to join the company in 1977 and served as a back step rider on the engine. After completing training as a Firefighter III, she became a Maryland emergency medical responder and then went on to obtain credentials to drive emergency vehicles. Karen serves on the following Level committees: Awards Banquet and Family Day; Banquet Hall Rentals; Budget; Fund Drive; Parade Chair; and website and vending. She has been the banquet hall chair for the last 15 years. In 2007, Karen received the Charlotte Gallion Award, the Ladies Auxiliary's highest honorary award given for perseverance, and in 2025, was inducted into the Harford-Cecil Volunteer Firemen's Hall of Fame. Karen's lifelong commitment to the safety of Harford County citizens is a beautiful example of dedication.



## Heather Matricciani

*Nominated by Susanne Forno*



**H**eather Matricciani volunteers for the Brandon Tolson Foundation, which provides emotional and financial support to those who have lost a child. After losing her son, Joel, in an accident, Heather received services from the foundation and now serves as a parent representative on the foundation's board and as a parent advocate, welcoming new families. Heather often attends funerals on behalf of the foundation and connects parents to support information. She formed Smiles for Miles, Stroll for Joel 5K Run and 1 Mile Walk in honor and memory of her son and to help raise money for the foundation. The run was named for Joel's ability to make others smile. Heather also participates in and supports other foundation events and fundraisers, including the annual bull roast. Heather's ability to share her experience to help other families deal with grief is a beautiful gift.



## Amy Miller

*Nominated by Mary Karen Fox-Talbot*



**A**my Miller is a dedicated volunteer committed to preventing food insecurities through Grace United Methodist Church's food pantry. As the pantry director, Amy is a retail partner with the Harford Community Action Agency and the Maryland Food Bank through the Target Retail Recovery program and collects an average of 1,300 pounds of food per week for the church's pantry. She has secured \$25,000 in grants through the Church of Latter-Day Saints and the Maryland Food Bank, enabling the purchase of food and equipment, including shopping carts, shelving and a second freezer. Each year, Amy coordinates a Thanksgiving drive and provides meals to 84 families in need. Amy and her husband own a farm and are working to create a nonprofit to be named the Harford County Food Bank Farm. Her unyielding commitment to those in need makes Amy a truly beautiful volunteer.



## BangTam Miller

*Nominated by Ron Filling*



**B**angTam Miller started her community service with her family and their dry-cleaning business. They would provide hotels for the homeless and vouchers to do laundry, and collect and distribute food. As a teacher who often paid for a student's lunch debt, BangTam researched and reminded schools to fill out applications for state funding to ensure more students would receive discounted or free lunches. She provided free

GED tutoring through the Church of the Fruitful Living. BangTam served on the Human Relations Board and was a Vietnamese interpreter for parents attending IEP meetings. She founded the 755 Alliance, a nonprofit organization, to continue her community outreach and make it easier to obtain grants for community needs. Through these grants, BangTam and the Alliance were able to create pantries at the Boys & Girls Clubs, multi-area community cleanups, an emergency fund, plus several park reconstruction projects. BangTam's selfless outreach has made her community and Harford County a more beautiful place to be.



## Christina Newman

*Nominated by Angelique Newman*



Christina Newman is a retired landscaper and master gardener dedicated to the beautification of her community. Despite having several illnesses, including Lupus, Christina performs landscaping services in Edgewood and Joppa where she creates gardens for the welcome sign on Willoughby Beach Road in Edgewood and provides upkeep to the grounds at Luna's House, Flying Point Park and Joppa Magnolia Fire Station. She removes tree limbs where needed for pedestrian and police safety. Christina organizes food donations and grocery store drives for the Hope Center of Maryland and volunteers with the CARES Community with donations and their Easter egg hunt and Grynoch Gives Back toy and clothing events. Christina's willingness to lend a hand where necessary is a beautiful example of what a volunteer is.



## Terrence Murphy

*Nominated by John Cooney*



Rev. Terrence "Terry" Murphy has served as a firefighter and EMT with Jarrettsville Volunteer Fire Company for 24 years. Additionally, he is the fire company's chaplain, offering spiritual guidance and emotional care to fellow firefighters, victims and their families. The quiet presence and strength of his pastoral care have been the cornerstone of the company's support system. Rev. Murphy offers this presence at community events, fire safety education programs and memorial services. His dedication to helping others is a beautiful enrichment to not only the Jarrettsville Volunteer Fire Company, but to his fellow Harford County citizens.



## Al Peteraf



*Nominated by Donna Burke*



**C**ommitted to the beautification of his community, Al Peteraf is the founder of Citizens Against Trash, also known as the CAT Club. What started as an observation and a need to clean up the City of Havre de Grace evolved into a movement that has hosted over 1,000 volunteers over the years. Al has since merged the CAT Club with Community Projects of Havre de Grace Inc.,

which allows him to operate under a nonprofit and therefore request grants to further his mission by purchasing buckets and grabbers and host events with schools and civic groups. The CAT Club promotes community and friendships and has branched into Adopt-a-Block programs throughout the city. Additionally, Al has created community gardens and works in others to provide fresh produce to local pantries. As a local musician, Al has played charity concerts for the Colored School Museum and Cultural Arts and served on the board of the Jazz Festival before the pandemic. Al's commitment to his neighborhood ensures its beauty in Harford County.



## Michael Sherman



*Nominated by Neil Huber*



**M**ichael Sherman has been a committed volunteer with the Bel Air Moose Lodge for eight years. The Moose is a fraternal program of community service providing for the group's two charitable organizations: Mooseheart, which serves children in need, and the senior residents at Moosehaven. He has served as a trustee, vice president, president, and is a junior past president. He has been the secretary of the Moose Legion, the regional sect of the Moose charter, handling membership information, reports and new member ceremonies. Michael spends hours keeping the logistics of the lodge running smoothly, from fixing equipment to working with contractors, and even using his prior experience in the kitchen during special events. Michael's dedication is a beautiful reminder of what it means to volunteer.

## Pat Venturino



*Nominated by Tammy Lynn Schneegas and Rebecca Jessop*



For the past 10 years, Pat Venturino has volunteered her time and resources as a photographer for organizations and events in the city of Havre de Grace and beyond. In 2024 and 2025 alone, she photographed over 220 events, including First Fridays, the Havre de Grace Yacht Club races, ribbon cuttings and the annual 4th of July parade and festivities. She was recognized by the mayor of Havre de Grace as the “Official, Unofficial Photographer of Havre de Grace,” and her work has been used in the city’s marketing materials and website. Pat not only provides photography, but numerous hours of editing, posting and uploading, all at no cost to the receiving organization. Additionally, Pat serves on the board of directors for the youth sailing program designed to build character and confidence in youth 7 to 17, and organized the Women of Havre de Grace, a social group of volunteer women. Pat’s photographic ability captures the beauty of her dedication to community.

## Crystal Yamber



*Nominated by Susanne Forno*



Crystal Yamber volunteers for the Brandon Tolson Foundation, which provides emotional and financial support to those who have lost a child. After the loss of her son, Justin, Crystal joined the foundation to provide the same connection to other families in grief. She is the coordinator for the foundation’s Grieving Moms program and plans creative, meaningful gatherings for grieving mothers.

Some of these included events at Amazing Glaze, a Picnic in the Park, Scent-sational Candle making and a Sunset Gentle Meditative Yoga at Ladew Gardens. She was nominated for the Freedom Federal Credit Union Freedom to Help Award in January 2025 for her efforts. Crystal has turned grief into a beautiful gift to moms in need in Harford County.

## 755 Alliance

*Nominated by Robert Wagner*



The 755 Alliance was created by BangTam Miller with a goal to revitalize the Edgewood Road/Route 755 corridor and promote sustainability, attract investments and businesses, build wealth, encourage entrepreneurship and create jobs, plus support Edgewood area households experiencing food, housing or transportation insecurities. Their motto is “Together We Can” – and they have. Volunteers of this group help run community cleanups, including trash removal from bus shelters along Route 40; provide assistance with food, housing and transportation through the 755 Alliance Emergency fund; partner with the Sharing Table for the Farmers’ Market at the Edgewood American Legion; plant trees; promote community events and encourage residents to help make their community a better place to live. The 755 Alliance has shown that the beauty of community withstands all.

## Bel Air Lions

*Nominated by P. J. Chambers*



The Bel Air Lions have been serving the Bel Air and Harford County community for over 82 years. This group, with over 50 volunteers, is committed to community service projects like the Rockfield Manor Sensory Garden and Bel Air Independence Day celebration, and they provide awareness and prevention programs for diabetes. They sponsor Camp Possibilities and

Camp Destiny for children with diabetes and promote the disease through their annual Strides Walk, which raises money for the camps. Additionally, the Bel Air Lions provide eyeglass and hearing aid donations as well as food, shelter and medical assistance to those in need. Their Medical Loan Closet is a community necessity, loaning free medical equipment, including wheelchairs and hospital beds. The commitment of the Bel Air Lions' volunteers is a beautiful gift to the Harford County community.

# Ma & Pa Trail Monitors

Nominated by Debbie Ropinski



The Ma & Pa Trail Monitors are a group of over 40 individuals dedicated to the upkeep and beautification of Harford County's historic Ma & Pa Trail. This group puts in over 2,600 hours per year collectively to ensure the beauty and safety of the trail for residents and visitors to the county. They are well trained in the history of the trails as well as crucial environmental care of existing foliage. These volunteers address trail concerns with Harford County Parks and Recreation, remove trash, ensure facilities are in excellent condition, tend to gardens, trim overgrown brush and low hanging branches, clear debris and ensure visibility. They transform the trails into a safer and more enjoyable environment for everyone. The Ma & Pa Trail Monitors' commitment to the trails is as beautiful as the trails themselves.



A dark blue background filled with numerous gold and silver stars of various sizes, creating a festive and celebratory atmosphere.

*Congratulations to  
this year's nominees!*

A sincere thank you to those who took the time to nominate their unsung hero for the 39th Annual Harford's Most Beautiful People Awards!

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*A Cappella Journey  
Congratulates  
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**A Cappella Journey**

*Tenor: Diane Sengstacke*

*Lead: Pat Keen*

*Baritone: Peg Nichols*

*Bass: Beth Rupert*

**WMAR-TV**

*Special thanks to Pastor Gregg and Dodi Alsbrooks,  
Deb Sword, and the Bel Air Church.*



**Bob Cassilly, County Executive**



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