

# Media Release



**Maryland State Arts Council** • 175 W. Ostend Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21230  
Contact: Carla Dunlap • 410.767.6494 • cdunlap@msac.org  
Cliff Murphy • 410.767.6450 • cmurphy@msac.org

---

## **ACHIEVEMENT IN LIVING TRADITIONS AND ARTS AWARDS TO BE PRESENTED** *June 11 Maryland Traditions Event Features Awardees*

BALTIMORE, MD (June 2, 2009) – Maryland Traditions, a cooperative program of the Maryland Historical Trust and the Maryland State Arts Council celebrates folklife and living traditions in Maryland through the presentation of the annual ALTA Award. The ALTA Award will be presented to three recipients at the Maryland Traditions showcase *Maryland Masters: Down the Street and Around the Globe* **on June 11 at 7:30 p.m.** at the Creative Alliance at the Patterson in Baltimore.

This year's awardees are **Blob's Park & Bavarian Bier Garten in Howard County**; banjo maker George Wunderlich of **Washington County**; and the **Swan Meadow School of Oakland's 6th, 7th, and 8th Grade Students (Garrett County)**.

The ALTA Award, which stands for Achievement in Living Traditions and Arts, was created in 2007 to honor the work of folklorist and community leader Dr. Alta Schrock, who died in 2001. Dr. Schrock, a native of Garrett County, taught biology at Frostburg State University, and also founded publications, events and lasting institutions designed to share and preserve her region's traditional art forms. She was the force behind The Spruce Forest Artisan Village, Penn Alps, The Journal of the Alleghenies and the Springs Festival, to name several of her achievements in cultural conservation.

Each year, three awards are designated – for a Maryland person, place, and tradition that best epitomizes Maryland's cultural heritage. Individuals are selected based on their demonstration of the highest standards of excellence in such areas as research, documentation, presentation, entrepreneurship, artistry, stewardship and community impact; places honored are those that specially serve to keep traditions alive and that are meaningful and effective gathering places or sites for carrying on living or endangered traditions; and traditions recognized are those that connect communities to cultural heritage in authentic and appropriate ways that exemplify the unique spirit of our state and may include events, occupations, knowledge, cultural scenes, and organizations.

**George Wunderlich** lives in Hagerstown and is an internationally acclaimed builder of minstrel era (mid-1800s) Wunder banjos. He is a leading expert on Baltimore banjo maker William Boucher, the world's first commercial banjo maker. Mr. Wunderlich is praised by banjo enthusiasts as a leading facilitator of dialog between Maryland's instrument makers, performers, historians, and the public. Maryland has long been a center of banjo making and of scholarship of the banjo, and Mr. Wunderlich is credited with creating local and international awareness of Maryland's role in the development and study of this iconic instrument.

**Blob's Park & Bavarian Bier Garten** is located in Jessup. Founder Max Blob first opened his doors to the public in 1933 to celebrate Maryland's vibrant German heritage. A family institution, Blob's is now owned and managed by great-nephew Max Eggrel. Since its first days, Blob's has been the home for social gatherings, homecomings, and anyone interested in great polka music and hearty German fare. Open Wednesday through Sunday, Blob's Park is a meeting place for people of all cultural backgrounds to learn traditional Eastern European social dancing and to hear the best in local, regional, and international polka music.

**Swan Meadow School of Oakland** is a state-funded school with a largely Amish and Mennonite student body from the community of **Gortner**. Under the direction of teacher **Elizabeth Rees-Gilbert** and with assistance from **Western Maryland Regional Library**, the **6th, 7th, and 8th grade students** conducted a three year community documentation project that became **Piece a Quilt of Gortner** publication and the foundation for **Getting to Know Gortner**, a K-12 educational packet. **Getting to Know Gortner** will be used by area schools to educate students on the musical, culinary, literary, and storytelling traditions of the Amish and Mennonite communities of Western Maryland.

For more information about the ALTA Awards and Presentation, contact Maryland Traditions co-directors Clifford Murphy at 410-767-6450 (cmurphy@msac.org) or Elaine Eff at 410-514-7653 (eeff@mdp.state.md.us).

For directions to The Patterson Theater visit [www.creativealliance.org](http://www.creativealliance.org) or call 410-276-1651 for tickets to the Maryland Traditions Showcase and ALTA Awards Ceremony.

The Maryland State Arts Council, an agency of the Maryland Department of Business & Economic Development, Division of Tourism, Film and the Arts, is dedicated to cultivating a vibrant cultural community where the arts thrive. In 2007, non-profit arts organizations and arts programs that received operating support from the State Arts Council contributed more than \$1.2 billion to the State's economy and provided 15,000 jobs to Maryland residents.

For information on the Arts Council visit [www.msac.org](http://www.msac.org), email [msac@msac.org](mailto:msac@msac.org), or call 410-767-6555 or TTY 410-333-4519.

**Photos available - contact Cliff Murphy, 410-767-6450 or [cmurphy@msac.org](mailto:cmurphy@msac.org)**

###