



# PRESERVATION AWARD 2023

- ◆ OUTSTANDING RESTORATION OF AN HISTORIC PROPERTY
- ◆ OUTSTANDING ADAPTIVE REUSE OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS
- ◆ COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

## Jim and Charlotte Sharf

Each year the Somerset Trust celebrates individuals who have made exceptional contributions to our architectural heritage. In the past we have honored people for their work in three areas: historic preservation, repurposing historic structures, and community stewardship. But this year, the Trust board encountered the happy conundrum of not being able to give an award for any one of these categories, because ... this year's honorees merit recognition in all three areas!

### This year we give our thanks to Jim and Charlotte Sharf !

Hailing from Washington D.C. and parts beyond, they brought with them to Somerset a love of place and their commitment to doing good works for the betterment of their new home and community. Since coming to the Shore in 1995, the Sharfs have given of themselves in ways not easily quantified. When they arrived here on vacation 28 years ago, they stayed at the Murphey's Washington Hotel and were smitten with the aura of the place, the town, and its ancient history. And so, they settled in. They found a 1750's colonial house called 'The Reward' on the Pocomoke River and began the long labor of restoring it. Eventually, with the help of historical architect Michael Bourne, they brought it back to its original form and now have one of the most beautiful architectural treasures in the county.



Simultaneously, they set out to do what they could to improve the face of Princess Anne and its economic prosperity.

- 2000 Stabilized, replaced the roof, flooring, electrical, plumbing of a house at William & Church Streets in Princess Anne, now a beautiful home.
- 2005 Bought Independence Hall, an historic building on Somerset Ave. Told it had no historical significance, they found otherwise when they began restoration and discovered its 1880s fabric. They also found that nothing met current building codes! Over 15 years they updated all systems, created 8 residential apartments, and formed or housed a total of 11 different businesses, including Petite Fleur, Barefoot Baby, Rebecca's Ice Cream and now Squeaky's and O Grace and Glory clothing store.
- 2006 Formed an investment group to restore the oldest continually operating Inn in Maryland – The Washington Hotel. They found investors, facilitated its purchase, negotiated State support for the renovation, and found an operator for the renamed Washington Inn and Tavern.
- 2006 Jim headed a significant restoration of roof, foundation, windows and doors of the Manokin Presbyterian Church, founded in 1682.
- 2007 Acquired the Old Bank of Somerset, stabilized the foundation, windows, replaced the roof, repointed brick, and designed an upstairs apartment. The ground floor became their office for 16 years.
- 2007 Took the lead with Jim & Simonne Theiss and Ben & Jen Alder to establish the Main Street Program, whose goal was structural improvement and business development in downtown Princess Anne. Charlotte was the program's chairperson for 10 years.
- 2009 Purchased the Fontaine-Fitzgerald-Lecates House on Prince William Street, replaced the roof, foundation, porch, added insulation, and repainted it inside and out. The home now graces Princess Anne's historic district.

And now perhaps one can understand why the Trust was unable to categorize their work. The Sharfs have done it all.

Jim and Charlotte have been gentle leaders, personal friends, and generous motivators for dozens of others. They have attracted like-minded people who value special things and pride of place. How do you thank people like that? The best answer is that we're doing it already—we who have the same goals for our community, we who are rolling up our sleeves, taking care of our aging historic relics, and honoring our local traditions. We are paying it forward.