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By [Sloane Brown](#) | For The Baltimore Sun. UPDATED: November 8, 2024 at 11:32 AM EST

The stacks were packed at the 20th Annual Harford County Public Library Gala. Some 600 folks filled the Abingdon library branch for the shindig, whose theme is always based on a book. This year, the chosen tome: Erin Morgenstern’s “Night Circus” – inspired a Victorian circus theme, Cirque de Magie. A juggler, stilt walker, magicians and fortune tellers were scattered throughout and a “big top” hung over the dance floor.

“It’s our 20th gala, so we pulled out all the stops,” said Amber Shrodes, the library’s director of philanthropy and community engagement. “We started it as a thank you to our community and we’ve made it a party that everybody wants to come to,” said Mary Hastler, library CEO.

“We make it so much fun that people are already saving the date for next year,” she said, with a laugh. That date, by the way? Nov. 1, 2025.



From left – Brian Lipford, Key Technologies retired co-owner, Sharon Lipford, CopperMile Consulting owner/Harford County Public Library Foundation board president, Phil Smith, Cargill sales advisor, and Barry Glassman, former Harford County Executive, at the 20th Annual Harford County Public Library Gala. (Sloane Brown)



From left, Adam Gay, US government lead IT specialist, Jessica Gay, Integrity Advantage owner, and Julie Ayler and Joe Ayler, Tar Heel Construction Group co-owners at the 20th Annual Harford County Public Library Gala. (Sloane Brown)



From left, Eric McLaughlin, PK Law partner, Grace Lohr, circus performer, Cheryl McComas, community volunteer, and Howard McComas IV, McComas Family Funeral Homes president, at the 20th Annual Harford County Public Library Gala. (Sloane Brown)



The tarot card reader was a popular attraction at the 20th Annual Harford County Public Library Gala. (Sloane Brown)



Folks danced under the big top at the "Night Circus" themed Harford County Public Library Gala, held in the Abingdon branch. (Sloane Brown)



From left - Jennifer Vido, Harford County Bar Foundation executive director, and Durbin Vido, Brown Advisory client advisor/Harford County Public Library board member, at the 20th Annual Harford County Public Library Gala. (Sloane Brown)



From left, Harford County Public Library colleagues: Mary Hastler, CEO, Dr. William Allen, board chair, and Amber Shrodes, director of philanthropy and community engagement, at the 20th Annual Harford County Public Library Gala. (Sloane Brown)



From left, Silvana Bowker, Harford County deputy health officer/Harford County Public Library board member; Chad Bowker, US Department of the Army business chief; Justin Harbin, Harford County Public Schools English teacher; and Rachel Harbin, Service Coordination vice president/Harford County Public Library board member, at the 20th Annual Harford County Public Library Gala. (Sloane Brown)



From left - John Mettee IV, Frederick Ward Associates senior vice president, Jamila Mettee, Frederick Ward Associates accounting/human resources manager, and Angel Windsor and Bobby Windson, Nature's Care and Wellness/The Local co-owners at the 20th Annual Harford County Public Library Gala (Sloane Brown)



From left, Bridget Forney, Profiles senior vice president, Steve Ryan, program manager, Jennifer Kee, Kiddie Academy director of public relations, and Mike Kee, Campbell and Company director of technology, at the 20th Annual Harford County Public Library Gala. (Sloane Brown)



A circus juggler was among the "Night Circus" themed attractions at the 20th Annual Harford County Public Library Gala. (Sloane Brown)



From left, Hillary Tayson, Coffee Coffee owner, and Lee Tayson, Comparion Insurance Agency account executive/Harford County Public Library Foundation board member, at the 20th Annual Harford County Public Library Gala (Sloane Brown)



A live auction was featured in the "center ring" at the "Night Circus" themed Harford County Public Library Gala. (Sloane Brown)



The Harford County Public Library Gala featured several activities along the "Night Circus" theme, including a tarot card reader. (Sloane Brown)



The Abingdon branch library served as party central for the 20th Annual Harford County Public Library Gala. (Sloane Brown)



From left, Heather Johnson, Harford County Public Schools kindergarten teacher; Keva "The Bow Tie Jeweler" Johnson, Rockwell Jewelers owner, and Sandy and Jazz Tucker, Island Spice co-CEO's, at the 20th Annual Harford County Public Library Gala. (Sloane Brown)



From left, Tom Evans, retired pharmacist, Carolyn Evan, DiPaula Law attorney, Mary Ann Bogarty, Jarrettsville Federal chief lending officer, and Dan Bogarty, Fallston Liquors owner, at the 20th Annual Harford County Public Library Gala. (Sloane Brown)



From left - Liza Gill, Bel Air-based therapist, Whitney Nechay, federal fraud investigator, and Sarah Shaw, EA Engineering director of subcontracts, at the 20th Annual Harford County Public Library Gala. (Sloane Brown)