

# ARABBING: More Than a Way of Life, continued...

media and all those reality TV shows. Arabbing teaches so much more about responsibility and compassion. A more positive way of life.”

Educating youth is now a primary focus of Johns, who is hoping to turn the Bruce Street Stable into an education center. “I’ve seen where Arabbing has gotten a lot of people off the street,” she said. “It teaches kids there is another way of life outside of a phone and computer.”

Johns feels learning about horses and their care is a “big deal” to many of Baltimore City’s urban youth. “I want to create a voucher system to reward positive behaviors that will lead to successful lives. If we can get to them before the streets do, they have a shot,” she said, adding, “It’s something really needed by the community.”

Chase agrees saying, “now more than ever we need to turn the whole country around. Its time for us to make that change.”

## Preserving a Culture

The Arabber Preservation Society (APS) was founded in March of 1994, initially to help the Retreat Street Stable comply with changing city building codes. The non-profit organization is

dedicated to the support and preservation of all of Baltimore’s Arabbers with their mission statement reading, “We recognize Arabbing as an African-American folk tradition; an economically viable system and a method of apprenticeship completely unique to Baltimore.”

Over the next few years, APS created various programs to highlight the positives of the Arabbing culture including a farrier apprenticeship program beginning in 1995 with a veterinary program being initiated the following year. APS purchased the historic carriage house on Lemmon Street in 1996 to create the Arabber Museum and in 1998, published a study entitled “Arabbing in the 21st Century.”

APS continues to represent the Arabbers in relation to various city regulations, which over the years have often sought to remove Arabbing from Baltimore. “Baltimore City has had its ups and downs in terms of support,” Cohen stated. “To me, Arabbing is like this beautiful little wild plant that you want to see flourish. It’s an endangered lifestyle.”

“The rules by the City are really restrictive,” Johns said, adding, “we can’t go out after dark,

which in the winter really impacts us because that’s when our customers are coming home from work.” All in all, Johns understands why such rules are put in place and said, “we go out when we can.”

In 2010, APS successfully lobbied to have the Arabber Community of Baltimore added to Preservation Maryland’s Endangered Maryland program. Preservation Maryland is the State’s oldest and largest preservation organization dedicated to advocacy, outreach and education, and funding of Maryland’s historical landmarks and cultural activities.

“The Arabbers are a unique part of Maryland’s equine culture that ranks right up there with the Assateague Ponies and our other time-honored horse traditions,” Peddicord said. “The Arabbers, like the Chesapeake watermen, are one of those cultural icons that make Maryland ‘Maryland’.”

“I can’t really describe the feeling of Arabbing,” Johns concluded. “It’s like you are doing something great. You’re part of the community. One with the horse and one with the people. A part of the people. That’s why we do it.”



Arabber Preservation Society photo

Baltimore’s Arabbing youth riding in the 2019 Mayor’s Parade where their entry finished second overall.



Anne Litz

MHIB Executive Director Ross Peddicord, Baltimore City Animal Control Officer Sharon Miller, documentary film maker Holden Warren, Carlton Street Stable owner Levar Mullen and MD Stable Inspector Ellen James at the Carlton Street Stables