

THE ARTS



Cemetery Club
Crews work half to death staging
Langham Court play.

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ARTS NEWS IN BRIEF

UVic production tackles tobacco

Tonight is the final performance of *Six Billion Suicides*, a University of Victoria production exploring the many sides of tobacco use. The free play by Ryan Levis features local actors and takes place at the UVic Student Union Vertigo Lounge, from 7 to 8 p.m. The show is 19-plus. For more information call 589-7926.

Child's play inspires gallery show

Painter Mark Heine's exhibition *At Play*, about the importance of play to children's development, is on display at the Avenue Gallery, 2184 Oak Bay Ave., Sunday, June 8 to 21. At 1 p.m. this Sunday Heine speak of the inspiration behind the show and will remain at the gallery through the afternoon. Partial proceeds go to the Queen Alexandra Foundation for Children. For more information call 598-2184.

Sculptures display various mediums

The Vancouver Island Sculptures Guild will host a group show from June 7 to July 19 featuring pieces in clay, glass, metal and wood. A reception is planned for Saturday, June 7 from 7 - 9 p.m. at the Victoria Arts Connection, 2750 Quadra St. Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays to Fridays and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays. For more information call 477-9089.

Telling the underdogs' story firsthand

Filmmaker's documentary about Laurel House gives her new understanding of the abilities of people with so-called disabilities

Patrick Blennerhassett
News staff

Last October, Laurel House, a mental health drop-in facility primarily run by its members, was on the verge of shutting down.

Protesters staged a seven-day sit-in after the Vancouver Island Health Authority moved most of its programming to the more structured Canadian Mental Health Association's headquarters on Skinner Street in Victoria West.

However, the sit-in led to a six-month discussion between the facility's operators and VIHA, and finally late March clients heard good news: Laurel House would remain open.

The story was one of perseverance and at-risk individuals fighting, and winning, against bureaucracy. And to top it all off, someone was filming the whole thing while it went down.

That someone was former Media Net services director Monique Cartesan, who delved into the goings-on at this activity centre geared toward people with mental illnesses.

"The documentary is about the struggle of the Laurel House members who take on the

authorities which is a very brave move in the best of times," she said.

"But especially for people who are marginalized and very vulnerable. And basically they got their way. Laurel House is not closing in spite of everything."

Crazy About Laurel House premieres this Saturday (June 7), hosted at 7 and 9 p.m. by the Movie Monday crew at the Eric Martin Pavilion, 2334 Trent St.

Cartesan juggled filming while also working a full-time job. Her chronicle takes viewers all the way back to the initial surprise shut-down announcement from VIHA, a move she said is still somewhat shrouded in bureaucratic secrecy.

"All of a sudden this just came out of nowhere and people were like 'What?' And it had been running successfully for 25 years; there was absolutely no reason for them to close it down."

She heard several opinions on why it happened, from the centre's limited accessibility to a lack of funding.

"It was all very vague and nobody was consulted. That's something I have to stress, the consumers were not consulted. The staff mem-

bers were not consulted, psychiatrists were not consulted, nobody was. It was like this secret plan that was discussed by VIHA and the Capital Mental Health Association."

The activity centre offers members a place to do a multitude of activities, from playing cards and sitting in an outside garden, to just hanging out with other members. The house was a haven for a lot of people, said Cartesan, some of whom have trouble fitting into regular society.

Discussions are still ongoing as to the level of services that will be provided for the 120 members. Cartesan said the documentary is a pitch-perfect example of a group of people fighting for what they believe in.

"These people, they fought city hall, so to say, and won. It just goes to show that it can be done no matter who you are."

Cartesan hopes to take the film on the festival circuit after its local release.

Also on the docket Saturday will be Laurel House member Kathleen Sumilas who was instrumental in keeping the facility open.

Admission is by donation. For more information, please visit <http://www.movie monday.ca>.

patrickb@vicnews.com



Sharon Tiffin/News staff

Monique Cartesan, director of the new documentary *Crazy About Laurel House*, is excited about the release of the film. It shows Saturday at 7 and 9 p.m.

"These people, they fought city hall, so to say, and they won."
— Monique Cartesan