

To: Honorary Citizen Award Committee

July 20, 2021

Letter in support of Bruce Saunders for the City of Victoria Honorary Citizen Award

Bruce is not the sort of person who receives awards, for the simple reason he neither needs nor expects them. He models the words of St. Ignatius, "to labour and not ask for any reward." That's one of many reasons Bruce should be acknowledged.

Bruce created, nurtured and sustained the institution of Movie Monday. It was born out of his own pain and his gratitude for the people and institutions that helped him choose life when depression tempted him with an alternative. The medium of film spoke to him in a way that was out of the reach of therapists and pharmaceuticals, and he set out to create an environment where others could experience the insights and healing to be found in the stories of the cinema.

Movie Monday has been an institution in Victoria for over 25 years. It has been a place of fellowship, empathy and conversation. There's no metric for quantifying the positive impact that Bruce and Movie Monday have brought to thousands of people who have made their donations at the door, bought a bag of homemade popcorn or a piece of liquorice and settled back to see the world through new eyes.

I think St. Francis himself might have slipped in for the odd showing.

Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light
Where there is sadness, joy.

Martin L. Collis

Martin L. Collis PhD.

204-2930 Cook Street, Victoria, BC V8T 3S7

Attendee at M.M.

To: Honorary Citizen Award Committee

Letter of support for Bruce Saunders

July 21, 2021

Bruce Saunders: Filmmaker, Mental Health Advocate and Creator of Movie Monday weekly film program

I've attended many Movie Monday films at the Eric Martin Pavilion since I moved here in 2008. I'm a long-time film lover and have attended many international film festivals. Bruce has done a fabulous job of choosing high quality, relevant films along with background information and often live interviews or attendance by people involved in the film. He has provided a wonderful and much-needed community service.

Two examples of film experiences at Movie Monday that I particularly enjoyed:

Monday 21 Dec 2009 - **Johnny Cash: The Man, His World, His Music**

This wonderful documentary about the Man in Black has a great scene showing him being very receptive to and appreciative of aspiring young musician Don Freed. Don is now living in Victoria and Bruce arranged for him to attend and play a few songs after the movie. I knew Don over 30 years ago when I lived in Edmonton before moving to California and had lost touch. It was amazing to reconnect in this way!

Monday 21 Jun 2010 - **Peace Warrior**

The ultimate recovery story, this is a truly incredible film about Capt. Trevor Greene, the reservist who was attacked in Afghanistan with an axe to the head. He came home comatose and expected to stay that way, if he lived at all. He and his wife-to-be worked astonishingly hard on his recovery, surprising everyone. Bruce arranged for Trevor and his fiance to attend (a month before their wedding). Through the Q&A we learned of the work of a local Orthopedic surgeon who made it possible for Trevor to realize his dream of standing for their wedding, as well as neuroplasticity research at UVIC on his recovery. There were tears in everyone's eyes when Trevor stood up from wheelchair on stage!

Bruce chooses films that are not only high quality and entertaining, they are most often educational and inspirational and promote understanding and compassion.

Bruce has made Movie Monday very accessible to the community. Everyone has been welcome and accepted, admission by donation. The audience has been truly diverse, people from all walks of life, all social, economic and educational levels. Many of the Eric Martin patients and others who face mental health issues have attended.

Bruce often arranged for producers, directors, actors, and others connected to the films to attend, either in person or by call-in. He also frequently reaches out to local professionals, educators, activists, and others whom he thinks might learn something valuable from, or offer something valuable to, a particular viewing and discussion.

In the casual atmosphere of the post-film discussions Bruce is welcoming, patient, respectful, inclusive and non-judgmental. These interactions promote understanding, acceptance, compassion and healing.

Rob Wipond describes Movie Monday well in Focus Magazine: "Saunders has built a unique, popular regular event, one that operates effectively and entertainingly in the creative spaces between art, community dialogue, and mental health. ... there's often a feeling in the room that one is ... participating in something valuable for our community by giving space for lesser-heard voices and perspectives."

And as Bruce himself has said, "Even though we have a small venue, the ripples of information, positive attitude, and hope travel out into our community."

I wish to put Bruce Saunders' name forward to receive the City of Victoria Honorary Citizen Award for 2021.

Maylene McMillan

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