

SUPPORTING A COMMUNITY

MOVIE MONDAY

MOVIE MONDAY (MM) started as a sparky idea from a guy recovering from a severe depression and second suicide attempt. Just a month out of hospital, with no funding and no long term plan, my friend Peter from my support group and I started Movie Monday showing mental health related movies right in the hospital in a 100 seat lecture theatre with a video projector. The hospital's staff was receptive, one movie night led to three nights then six more Mondays in a row!

That was in May 1993. Now MM is recognized as a "Best Practice" in our mental health system. At first I publicized MM throughout the hospital and in my support group. When just a few people showed up, I broadened my advertising to hostels and drop-in centers downtown. The first few months I got butterflies in my stomach every time I thought of having to be there next Monday with the show for an expectant audience. For a person with mood swings, consistency can be a scary prospect. But I was enthusiastic about movies and it was my idea — there's nothing like ownership! I realized early that just showing up week after week — addressing the audience, consistently putting up eclectic, creative programming, talking about mental illness and health, making at least part of our psychiatric hospital a friendly approachable place — has a pervasive effect.

Even though we have a small venue, the ripple of information, positive attitude, and hope travels out into our community. I realized films could stimulate discourse about mental illness. The first time I presented a popular film with a mental illness theme and opportunity for discussion was "Benny and Joon." Since that first time, MM's

"Even though we have a small venue, the ripple of information, positive attitude, and hope travels out into our community."

schedule has always included a rich peppering of films, such as "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest," "Shine," or "Girl Interrupted," even "What About Bob?"

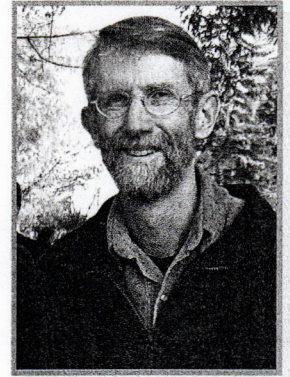
There are so many popular features which make powerful learning opportunities when presented with discussion opportunities and special guests. A big leap in commitment and exposure to the public was made when, to raise funds for better equipment, I was featured in an article in Victoria's city paper. It was a turning point when I weighed the risk of talking about my illness publicly. It's been a very positive move for me and my family.

One of the best results of this experiment has been to shed all the baggage that comes with the usual secrecy and to make a constructive thing of our family's challenges of mental illness. Weekly now, I see the healing effect of that openness. There have been many articles, radio and TV interviews, recognitions and awards since.

Now, eight years and almost 500 events later, the MOVIE MONDAY project is still a consuming interest and creative expression for me. My day job — landscape maintenance gardening — is thriving. Our family is too. My wife and I are celebrating our 27th anniversary and my two sons are going on into challenging post-secondary education — and they're kind of proud of the old guy. Through this whole period the MM initiative has redefined us as a family.

Last January we presented, with considerable acclaim, our third annual Reel Madness Film Festival — "five days of films and discussions about mental illness and recovery." This past June, I celebrated with good friends a 51st birthday I never thought I'd reach. I've still got an illness that I have to manage. But it's never lost on me the miracle that now I have this great privilege of presenting the pick of the film industry to vibrant, engaged audiences — downstairs in the same institution where I was once so absolutely without hope.

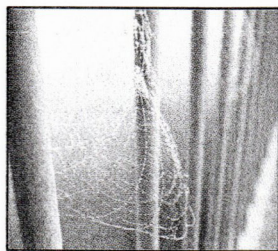
For more info on Movie Monday, current events, titles list, essays, photos, RM Film Fest events — check out the MM web site: www.islandnet.com/mm or e-mail to bruces@islandnet.com



Bruce Saunders

MDA Website Update

At MDA we are working hard on a new website that will more fully support our efforts to reach out to those living with a mood disorder or other mental illness. Our new site will include new members' stories, information on mood disorders, and an Ask the Professional section just to mention a few.



We are proudly introducing a special Facilitators Only area where MDA facilitators can log in and get support, information and encouragement to run their group. In order to make our new site relevant and useful we are looking for your stories and perspectives.

We are seeking questions to our professionals and are very interested in learning more from friends and family about what it's like to care for someone with a mood disorder or other mental illness.

We anticipate our new website will be launched by October 2008 so keep checking back for something new and exciting!

MDA Welcomes Its Latest Group in Sooke!

We are excited to announce a new MDA support group on Vancouver Island in Sooke, BC.

This group meets every 2nd and 4th Wednesday starting September 24, 2008, from 7 to 9 pm.

The group will meet at 7011 West Coast Road, 2nd Floor, stairs at the back. The facilitator for this group is Shelagh who can be reached at 250-642-7910.

The Mood Disorders Association welcomes both the new members who will attend this group and Shelagh as a facilitator. We are very pleased to have you.