

# Love of film spurs Reel Causes' Mohamed Ehab

by [Charlie Smith](#) on Jul 4, 2012 at 2:41 pm

Georgia Straight: <http://www.straight.com/movies/love-film-spurs-reel-causes-mohamed-ehab>



Mohamed Ehab (middle) built Reel Causes from the ground up.

[ReelCauses.org](http://ReelCauses.org)

Mohamed Ehab could probably write a book on how to help immigrants adjust to life in Canada. In an interview in the *Georgia Straight* boardroom, the Cairo-raised pharmacist brings no sorrowful tales about his foreign credentials not being recognized. Instead, he wants to discuss how he formed a network of about 1,400 local film lovers who raise money for charity.

Ehab is the founder of Reel Causes, a nonprofit society that hosts monthly screenings, usually at the Vancity Theatre, with all proceeds going to organizations engaged in good works. “We’re a secular, nonpartisan group,” he says. “In other words, we stay away from politics and religious themes. So it’s mainly health-care issues, social issues, food security, and the environment.”

He developed his passion for movies growing up in Egypt, where he also volunteered with a medical caravan that travelled to poor communities. Ehab explains that he wanted to move away from the Middle East and conducted diligent research before choosing Canada. He periodically visited to take the pharmacists’ licensing exams, and arrived in Vancouver on Canada Day in 2008 with his credentials in order.

“I was ready to work from day zero, and ready to enjoy the experience of living here from the first day,” Ehab says with a smile. “I wanted to be an active member of the community.”

A couple of months later, he used Meetup.com to start a group of people who love foreign and independent films. The first event attracted 10 people to his living room, where they were treated to Egyptian food.

Ehab recalls that as the group grew larger and no longer fit inside his home, they would go to theatres and talk about the movies in local restaurants. Within a year and a half, he says, there were 700 or 800 members.

That’s when he seized on the idea of turning his network into a fundraising organization. “At that time, I was volunteering with a nonprofit group called End the Pain Project,” Ehab states. “They provide therapy for amputees in areas like Vietnam and Cambodia.”

In 2009, they showed a German film called *Phantom Pain* at the Granville 7 Cinemas, attracting 300 people. From there, he formed the nonprofit Reel Causes and has been hosting monthly screenings ever since for numerous charities, including Doctors Without Borders, the Greater Vancouver Food Bank, Positive Women’s Network, ALS Society of British Columbia, and the Canadian Red Cross.

Often, the group arranges to speak to the filmmakers in person or via Skype. At the 2010 Amnesty International Film Festival, Reel Causes hosted *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*, which showed how courageous Liberian women helped end a civil war. At this fundraiser for the Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre, Reel Causes arranged an interview with the leader of the Liberian women’s group, Leymah Gbowee, who later shared the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize with Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Yemeni women’s-rights activist Tawakkol Karman.

He praises group member Robert Davidson for paying for the rental of the Vancity Theatre for three events, which enabled all the ticket revenue to go to charities. Ehab notes that since then, Vancity Credit Union has stepped up as a sponsor, covering theatre costs for an entire year.

**On Sunday (July 8) at 9 p.m., Reel Causes is teaming up with Canadian Parents for French and Vancity Credit Union to present a free open-air screening of *The Adventures of Tintin* (in French with English subtitles) in Stanley Park. The film will be shown in Ceperley Meadow next to the swimming pool at Second Beach.**