

‘Reel’ film screenings in Vancouver help fund charities

Monthly screenings often include director Q&As

By Will McDonald, Contributing writer July 3, 2012

Four years ago, Mohamed Ehab started a film club as a way to meet other film buffs after he moved to Vancouver from Egypt. When the club grew to 700 members, he realized its potential to benefit the community.

That led to his founding Reel Causes in 2010, a Vancouver-based non-profit that screens independent films once a month at the Vancity Theatre, and donates all the proceeds to local non-profits.

On Sunday, July 8, it will celebrate its support from the community with a free screening of the film *The Adventures of TinTin* in Stanley Park.

After more than 20 showings, Reel Causes claims to have raised over \$35,000 for 20 different charities that support human rights and social justice, including the Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre, the Canadian Red Cross and Doctors without Borders.

Reel Causes’ monthly screenings are often followed by question and answer sessions with directors or actors from each film. In 2010, Reel Causes hosted Leymah Gbowee, who appeared in the documentary *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*, which chronicled women in the Second Liberian Civil War. She went on to win the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize for her work as a women’s rights activist.

Meharoon Ghani began volunteering for Reel Causes in 2010. By 2011, she became a board member and took on the role of creating a strategic plan for the organization.

“My interest was from there from the beginning because it was about giving back to community,” Ghani said.

Ghani said the organization depends on its loyal volunteers. Both Ehab and Ghani are unpaid, making it a difficult task to keep the organization running.

“The key, especially since we’re 100 per cent volunteer and we all have other jobs, is finding a way to keep us moving forwards, where we’re not losing people and getting people burned out,” Ghani said.

She said Reel Causes wants to expand across Canada, but it has some expansion to do in Vancouver first. For the last few months, all of its shows have sold out in the 190-seat Vancity Theatre. There have been requests for two screenings a month, but Ghani said that with only seven volunteers and limited funding from the Vancity Credit Union, a second showing isn't feasible yet.

Ehab works full-time as a pharmacist, but makes time to support a cause he is passionate about.

“We dedicate our time and effort with love because we believe in what we do. The power of film and art in raising awareness,” he said.

The July 8 free screening of *The Adventures of TinTin* in Stanley Park is with the support of the Canadian Parents for French and the Vancity Credit Union.

“It's a way that we can give back to the public who have come out to support all our events,” said Ghani.

Ghani expects the showing to have more than 200 guests. The screening will be at Ceperley Meadow next to the Second Beach outdoor swimming pool at 9 p.m.

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