

From the desk of
Laura Thul Penza

February 3, 2009

Letters to the Editor
The Sun, P.O. Box 1377
Baltimore, MD 21278-0001
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Re: Acknowledging The Senator Theatre's Owner

Dear Editor,

I am pleased that the City has committed to assisting The Senator Theatre, a well-deserved focus of time and funding, in its transition to a community-based non-profit entity. As a business owner and community resident, I truly hope that the efforts are solid enough to keep the doors open during the transition.

Tom Kiefaber understands that many local businesses rely on The Senator, and that the community relies on the stability of the area. An integral partner in the wonderful redevelopment of Belvedere Square, which (thankfully!) received public funding, The Senator Theatre is still important to the Belvedere Square's on-going success. It may not be widely known that The Senator's in-kind donations have helped to raise millions of dollars for over 400 non-profit organizations. The closing of The Senator, for any length of time, would adversely affect many.

Tom's leadership and the commitment to the independent movie industry are recognized nationally. As the final historic single screen owner in the City of Baltimore, Tom Kiefaber has managed, against all odds, to keep one of the remaining historic single screen theaters in the Nation open. I've learned recently that the business model of a single screen historic theatre is not a profit-making business model. Ticket sales just do not compensate for operating costs, even for other successful theatres, such as The Silver Theater or The Avalon, which benefit from major public funding for both capital improvements and operating costs. It is amazing that Tom and his family have been able to keep the Theatre open longer than most, despite the inevitable negative cash flow. Tom has been working toward this transition to non-profit for years. And he knows that his family can no longer continue the investment to manage The Senator alone.

We should sincerely thank Tom for his 20 years of service, philanthropy and the preservation of such a special historic landmark. I hope he will have a key role in the future community-based non-profit entity - he understands the meaning of community. Money is not the only basis for judging a successful business or businessman. The Senator Theatre would probably have been shut down years ago, if it weren't for Tom Kiefaber's commitment and strong passion for The Senator and the community, instead of a desire to make a monetary profit. *Thank you, Tom!*

Sincerely,

Laura Penza
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