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BALTIMORE OBSERVED: TRANSFORMERS

Screen Dreams

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By: Marianne Amoss



Extra credit: Chris Muldowney, a caseworker at Family and Children's Services of Central Maryland, started a donation-only film series to benefit her elderly clients. | photo by Shelby Silvernell

University. The sisters had no other family and relied on FCS for transportation to medical appointments and help with groceries. When Eleanor passed away in 2004, less than a year after Anne, she left behind a signed photograph of silent film star Ramón Novarro—and a humble bequest to FCS of \$500.

Moved by the photo and the gift, Muldowney started a donation-only film series to benefit clients such as the Donovans, who often end up on waiting lists for city services. Held in the back room of sweets shop Rock Candy at 4321 Harford Road, the monthly series consists of vintage and recent Hollywood releases, such as the 1937 Cary Grant comedy, *The Awful Truth* (scheduled for January 17). Attendees range from twentysomethings on up, and Stevenson University assistant film and video professor Christopher Llewellyn Reed leads casual post-viewing discussions.

Harford Road businesses have rallied around Muldowney's cause, which has netted nearly \$20,000 to date and assists between seventy-five and a hundred seniors each year. The Chameleon Café offers discounts to movie ticket holders. When Rock Candy temporarily closed during renovations, Will's Hair-styling Shop held a fundraiser. And Grind On Café often serves dessert to moviegoers after hours. As Muldowney says, "It's really neighbors helping neighbors."

Chris Muldowney has lived in the Lauraville neighborhood of northeast Baltimore for the last twenty-four years. She greets by name just about everyone who walks through the door of Red Canoe Bookstore and Café, where she's sipping tea from a red mug on a sunny fall morning. During the week, Muldowney helps fixed-income seniors as a caseworker for Family and Children's Services (FCS) of Central Maryland, a private nonprofit that since 1849 has nimbly and creatively acted to help children, families, and the elderly live, as Muldowney puts it, "in a humane way." On the weekends, she turns her attention to Lauraville, where she's helped with cleanups and rallied support for closing a notorious local bar. "You don't have to just accept things as they are," she says. "You can make them different."

Muldowney's latest success story is the Donovan Fund, created in the memory of two FCS clients, sisters Eleanor and Anne Donovan, who lived together in a small apartment near Johns Hopkins

—Marianne K. Amoss