

December 14, 2006

To the National Storytelling Network Awards Committee:

I am writing this letter in support of Sean Buvala's nomination for the Distinguished National Service Award.

I have known Sean for at least ten years. I remember years ago when he came to an East Valley Tellers of Tales meeting to talk about storyteller.net. At the time, the concept seemed so daring and "cutting edge." Ten years later, the site has expanded to include articles and interviews as well as a calendar and venue for selling products. Just this fall, a storyteller from the Midwest was hired by a local elementary school to tell stories at their Fall Festival. As local storytellers wondered why they weren't considered for this gig, they were told that the hiring person found the storyteller through the internet at storyteller.net.

Over the years, I have heard Sean tell stories on numerous occasions, and each time I've been impressed by his integrity and style, whether he is telling a folktale or interweaving a folktale and a personal story. This past fall, Sean was a Regional Teller at the Mesa Storytelling Festival. Sean is a true professional who takes the time to craft and hone his stories so they will be most effective for the given situation.

Sean has been very generous with his time, volunteering to come into storytelling classes offered through the South Mountain Community College Storytelling Institute and participating in our Storytelling Amigos meetings. This fall Sean came into two of my classes—Using Storytelling in a Variety of Settings and Storytelling II. In both classes he told stories and talked about venues where he tells stories, marketing and other business aspects of storytelling, plus the challenges faced by one who wants to have a career in storytelling. He spent almost two hours in each class, staying after the time I had asked for in order to answer questions from students. In September, he gave a two-hour workshop "Fidget, Flicking and Finesse: What to do with your Gestures" for our Storytelling Amigos meeting. It was a well-planned interactive workshop that left everyone impressed with what they had learned in such a short time. Volunteerism at its best!

This past year, Sean established a storytelling venue at the Borders bookstore in Avondale. On the third Saturday of the month, he and other local storytellers will tell stories in the coffee shop area of this Borders bookstore from 7 – 8:30pm. Sean has encouraged students from our advanced classes to come out and tell in this venue. He works with the storytellers to help them understand how to use a microphone, how to talk over the coffee-grinding machine, and how to choose the types of stories that will appeal to this varied audience. Anyone who tells at Borders is given a web page on storyteller.net free for three months. Community Service at its finest!

Sean is a full-time professional storyteller who provides an invaluable service to the local and national storytelling communities, in addition to the general public, through his telling, his presentations, his workshops, and the services he provides through storyteller.net. He has my highest endorsement for the Distinguished National Service Award. Please feel free to contact me should you have questions.

Sincerely yours,

LynnAnn Wojciechowicz, Director
SMCC Storytelling Institute
Humanities & Storytelling Faculty
Phoenix, Arizona