HONORING HOWARD BERNSTEIN

SPEECH FOR

KATHLEEN SEARS

Hello all you kool kats and ginchy chicks!! Welcome to this year’s totally groovy celebration for the most “tuned in, far out, and craziest” organization we all love. Open Arts is “The End” when it comes to enriching the lives of everyone in our community, and there would be no Open Arts without the passion, devotion and generosity of our “Lama of Legal,’ our “Daddy-o of Digits,” our conscience, our backbone, our one and only, Howard Bernstein. Had we all been Beatniks “back in the day,” Open Arts would have been our “galaxy” and the self-expression and sense of community would have been described as “a gas,” but one thing would stay the same. Howard Bernstein has been and always will be our “Mensch.” I don’t think even the Beats could have come up with a better word to describe Howard. He is the embodiment of the term.

Some may say that when Howard walks into a room, his degrees follow him in like a well-ordered alphabet train. He is a smart and supremely well-educated man, and we could not be more honored to reap the benefits of his vision, comprehension and curiosity. (**Turn to Howard and say**) Yes, Howard you are man of letters and numbers and by nature would prefer to wield your magic behind the scenes, but tonight it is our privilege to acknowledge you for all that you have done for this organization and for each one of us and the community we serve.

Howard was in at the beginning. In 1994, Gary Zeff founded Open Studios and knew that he would need business and legal expertise and he found that in Howard. Howard was the perfect fit to help mold and guide Open Studios. Back in high school, Howard was on the yearbook staff and as that assignment was converted to an exploratory art class, Howard savored his first tastes of the lure of the arts. He became fascinated by wood blocks and metal engravings, and as an undergrad in New York City, he took an art class that literally used that city’s great museums as classrooms. As the students focused on one special object for exploration each week, Howard’s passion and calling emerged. It is no coincidence that Howard’s grandfather was an architect, and as he learned of the imminent demise of one of his grandfather’s hotels, Howard made it a point to rescue the mosaics so preciously placed in the original building. Yes, Howard had the “**saychel**” (**Yiddish for know how**) to appreciate the importance of art in our lives and he attained the encyclopedic know how to form, preserve, and maintain an organization devoted to sharing the arts with the community.

Howard’s generosity in supporting many organizations in our community and beyond is well known and tremendously appreciated, but the work he has done for Open Arts is legendary. Gary Zeff knew he needed “The Howard Bernstein Treatment,” and Howard knew the same. We at Open Arts are beyond blessed that our organization is Howard’s favorite and main pro bono project. It is no secret that non-profits rely on the generous pro bono work of attorneys, but Howard’s sense of commitment and dedication to Open Arts goes far beyond generosity. He was there at the beginning. He helped redo the original business plan, wrote the by-laws, and helped to put the board in place. Over the years he has spent thousands of hours watching over us-protecting, defending, insuring our organization will adapt to present and future corporate and community challenges and opportunities. Knowing that Howard really cares about Open Arts gives all of us great comfort. We are always aware of his presence, even if he isn’t saying a word, and that makes us fell safe and assured. Just knowing we have him on our side takes the sting out of otherwise stressful moments. His achievements and contributions are too many to mention-let’s just say that Open Arts would not be anywhere near as great as it is without the guidance and generosity of this fine man. Whether it’s a question of franchising the Open Arts concept, purchasing our art school, or settling an intellectual property debate regarding a neighboring Denver non-profit, Howard’s collaborative history with us is treasured by all.

Howard has acknowledged that his longevity with Open Arts is due in large part to the uniqueness of our structure and the synergy of our members. We are honored that Howard acknowledges our mutual respect and collective actions and although none of us in the boardroom can claim the title of “shrinking violet,” our voices meld into a positive and proactive harmony. (**Turn to Howard and say**) Howard, that is due in large part to your presence and involvement. As the group secretary, Howard takes minutes at board meetings the “old fashioned way.” He writes them down on a yellow legal pad with a pen. Did I just hear a gasp in the crowd? (**Wait for the laugh.)** He is my “left hand man,” silently scratching and scrolling, never missing a beat, but every now and then, he will lift his head, make a comment, and like a laser, his comments and opinions will be spot on. He is our rock, our legal counselor, our guiding voice.

We are so happy to be sharing such a wonderful evening with Howard’s family. His mother, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, wife, Laurie, and his children, Shira and Alana are here tonight, and I have to say that no matter how blessed we at Open Arts are for having Howard as our most valued and trusted “consiglieri,” the Bernstein family is truly blessed to be related to this real treasure of a man. Howard’s integrity has informed his way of life. He is devoted to his family and has designed his career so that he would be able to place his mother, wife and daughters first and foremost. Howard truly exemplifies the meaning of the word “mensch,” and in a day and age when we are bombarded with images of self-interest and greed, Howard Bernstein is a breath of fresh air. He cares about people and principles. He knows that the essence of a life well lived is seen in the moments of giving. He gives to other organizations as well, and he has been cycling with the Gene Team for 13 years in support of Children’s Hospital as part of the Courage Classic Benefit Ride. Howard loves more than just numbers and torts. He loves giving and mentoring, marine biology and nature…I could go on and on!!

Howard, you are an indelible mark etched on the landscape of this city and community. You live your life as though you too, are painting a rich and colorful canvas. Every gesture and bit of advice you share colors our world and makes our experience that much brighter. How lucky we are at Open Arts to be included in your family! Thank you for all you do! (**If appropriate**) We love you!