

Ken Bruza Eulogy
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Pine River Arts Council

Indispensable. Indefatigable. Irresistible. Irreplaceable. These are just a few words I found under the letter "I" in the dictionary, and they are big words, so I thought maybe I would sound half as smart as Ken if I used them to describe him. As a founding member of the Pine River Arts Council, and a vital part of the annual Lucky MacDuck Family Fun Day used to fund the Arts Council's grants, Ken was all of these "I" words.

First, he was Indispensable. Often meetings can get bogged down in procedures, minute details, too many opinions, and too few facts. Ken always knew when it was time to end debate, and his voice would rise above the chatter to draw us all back to the main point. He could find baloney in grant application language and did not hesitate to call it what it was. He was also the guy who did all of the little jobs on Lucky MacDuck Day--many times unnoticed--that the rest of us never considered. In fact, this year when we had to find volunteers to do "Ken's" jobs, we were a little baffled as to how to describe all of what he did! He was always around, always busy, and always happy to help. Of course, more of his time than he would admit was spent talking...to EVERYONE...and he did have his ways of looking busier than he might have been.

But Ken truly WAS busy. He was Indefatigable in his volunteerism. The man single-handedly contacted hundreds of businesses for donations, walking up and down the downtown streets to catch business owners at a good moment to follow up on requests; acquiring, hauling, and labeling 100 prizes; arranging for, on various occasions, food, golf carts, entertainment, art show contributions, equipment rental, grounds setup, and volunteers; attending hundreds of meetings, and working in all kinds of weather from early morning to late afternoon to pull off this annual fundraiser called Lucky MacDuck Day. He was as much a part of the day and the council in general, as the rubber ducks.

And he was Irresistible when he asked you to purchase those duck adoptions. Ken was at the Alma Farmers' Market twice a week with his little table and stuffed duck, selling tickets for the duck race. Kids loved him, he knew everyone, and he was so innocent looking and approachable, that the few times I tried to substitute there for him, I heard, "Oh, I always buy mine from that nice older man." His loyal customers would not be convinced that it was not a competition between salespeople. They wanted the Ken Bruza experience--usually 10 extra minutes of chit-chat--at least. And the business owners knew his silhouette in their doorway and reached for their checkbooks. He was persistent and charming, and by far our most successful volunteer.

Organizations made up of volunteers often have a high rate of turnover, but Ken was there from the beginning until he could no longer attend meetings due to his health. He is Irreplaceable. Sure, we found 3 people to do his work on soliciting donors and sponsors this year, and 5 of us took on the farmers market and some other sales that he used to cover, and Jan hired extra help to take over his shifts at the store; but his faithful, quiet service, his happy demeanor, and his insight can never be replaced. We will miss him not just in our work, but in our conversations and discussions, and in our lives.

Thank you Ken, for all of your contributions to the world around you!