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LETTER OF REFERENCE FOR IAN BROWN

My name is Suzanne Taylor and I have been the Director of Recreation for over 13 years at the White Rock Come Share Day program for Older Adults. I have had the pleasure of knowing Ian Brown since 2008. He is, by far, one of the most popular musicians who come in to our Centre. This will be an easy endeavor to profess the many wonderful qualities Ian possesses.

Ian is a wonderful, charming individual who brings out the best in others without even trying it seems. To watch him one quickly ascertains he is truly gifted at what he does. Ian understands the power of music and how it has the ability to transcend disease, illness, age and language barriers to name a few, and he educates others about this.

Prior to beginning his hour with us, Ian chats with the clients gauging how they are feeling, what the mood is, and he will ask staff how the day is going, etc. When Ian begins, his mannerism directly reflects the mood of the overall group, taking their needs into consideration and making their needs a priority. He does not play what *he wants*; he plays what our clients *need*. If they are feeling blue his song selections will be slow and steady and he will ask people how they are feeling throughout. Ian utilizes strategic song selections and the clients' requests to create an intimate camaraderie which elevates the mood and lifts spirits. Everyone begins smiling and humming or singing at one point or another.

While Ian is playing if someone is singing he will encourage staff to grab the microphone and hold it near or give it to the client so everyone can enjoy their voice. If the client is unsure about singing, he will squat beside them, being an anchor, providing the support they need. Generally, as soon as he is beside them, they sing! Ian knows when to encourage and when to 'move on' reinforcing the person's self esteem.

I have witnessed Ian being so 'in tune' with the clients, he will quickly change the song he is playing on the piano to match the lyrics the clients are singing, which belong to a different song! Ian won't stop and tell them *they* are singing the wrong lyrics (therefore lowering their self-esteem) *he* will quickly change the tune to match them. He is even talented enough to play by ear to the melody of a client remembering a folk song from years ago. The sheer delight of being accompanied on the guitar or piano is evident on the face of the client.

Ian literally makes magic happen. For example; when someone who is unable to converse/communicate appropriately radiates with joy because their unique efforts are recognized, encouraged and applauded by him; or when Ian travels around the circle playing his guitar, looking each person in the eye but he goes beyond their eyes, he sees the essence of the person which may be hidden behind illness or age. He engages the person with his caring and charm and they respond.

Over the years Ian has shown his versatility in adapting to the needs of our clients. He is constantly expanding his repertoire of music and being innovative in his delivery style. We never know what he will be doing next and we enjoy that! Ian encourages the clients to *feel* the music or really *listen* to the words; the clients' mannerisms and behaviour reflect them doing so. When he asks the clients to close their eyes and listen, clap to the rhythm, whisper the lyrics or shout aloud, they do it without hesitation or reservation. He is reminiscent of the Pied Piper; *everyone* follows along willingly.

Ian is a wealth of information regarding various genres of music and is able to answer a variety of questions posed by clients. If he does not know the answer to something and no one else knows he makes a point to find the answer and bring it next time; and he does. He is kind and compassionate, listening attentively to someone who is affected by dementia and validating them.

In addition, I must touch on the fantastic sense of humour Ian possesses. He brightens the day of so many people through funny jokes, stories and songs. The songs! We get goofy around here and make up different lyrics to a familiar tune. Put Ian into the equation and the laughter is overwhelming! He is incredibly creative and inspiring.

Ian is a coordinators delight with his professionalism and work ethic. His telephone messages and emails are always a delight to receive. Ian always gives plenty of notice regarding his availability, and when he is ill he immediately gives notice so we have time to find a replacement. He is very courteous and generous. He gives so much of himself for the benefit of others.

In my opinion Ian is a veritable example of what a music therapist should aspire to be. He is a wonderful educator, coach, mentor and advocate regarding the benefits and power of music.

Kind regards, Suzanne

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