



Powered by  Clickability

Peninsula News Review

## One-woman show spotlights mental illness



Marilyn Avient will present her life on stage at the Charlie White Theatre next week.

Submitted photo

[Buy Peninsula News Review Photos Online](#)  
By [Christine van Reeuyk - Peninsula News Review](#)

Published: September 24, 2009 1:00 PM

When Marilyn Avient steps on stage Wednesday night, it will be a miracle.

She is the one-woman show *Dirty Laundry*. The production is based on her autobiography *Free at Last*, based on her journey through mental illness. After being hospitalized three times for mental illness, she is now fully recovered and enjoying a fulfilling life. But that wasn't always the way.

Avient doesn't want to give away too much of the show but admits her son Sean took the brunt of her bouts with mental illness as he grew up.

"Sean was the scapegoat," she explained from her Nanoose home. Now he's producing the show that will debut at the Charlie White Theatre Wednesday, Sept. 30. The partnering is something she sees as a tremendous gift.

"A year ago he was angry that I'd even written the book, and now he's helping me. I couldn't have done it without him," she said. "It's a miracle that he wanted to do this."

*Dirty Laundry* brings to light the plight of those with mental illness.

"It is the story of my journey into, through and out of depression," Avient explained. "It's more poignant than my book, I'm able to show people and let people feel more emotion ... I have some really good stuff that happened in my life that's really colourful to show."

A really critical point about the show though, is how it helps people relate themselves.

"Everybody says you've made me think of things I hadn't thought about for years, or things I've never thought," she said. People will relate to her tales, realizing they aren't alone in certain feelings or moments.

"That is probably the most powerful impact. When a person actually sits in my audience and says 'wow that's my story,' when the details are different but the feelings ... I'm not afraid to let people see my feelings, I'm comfortable letting my guts out on stage."

Avient plays the lead in the two-act one-woman play that she adapted from her book, based on her

life.

“I wouldn’t trust anybody with it. It is me, the whole thing is me,” she said. “It moves, it’s humorous in parts, it’s really heart wrenching in parts.

“There is some humour, you have to find a little to laugh about or it’s just too damn sad, I mean life, not the show,” she said.

The production wraps in Sidney just as Mental Illness Awareness Week ([www.miaaw.com](http://www.miaaw.com)) begins on Oct. 4.

“It’s another way of educating, we all have to find our genre,” Avient said. “We want to educate, show them something about it that’s really in your face. Because it is an in your face thing. People should come partly for the entertainment, it’s a great way to learn when you’re actually enjoying as well.”

Others will see comfort and hope as Avient moves through her story.

“I was a basket case and I have a wonderful life now,” she said.

The show runs daily Sept. 30 to Oct. 4 in the Charlie White Theatre.

Tickets are \$31.50 for adults and \$20 for seniors and students, available at the Mary Winspear Centre box office 250-656-2275.

[reporter@peninsulanewsreview.com](mailto:reporter@peninsulanewsreview.com)

**Find this article at:**

[http://www.bclocalnews.com/vancouver\\_island\\_south/peninsulanewsreview/entertainment/61180097.html](http://www.bclocalnews.com/vancouver_island_south/peninsulanewsreview/entertainment/61180097.html)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

© Copyright Black Press. All rights reserved.