

# MAIN STREET



NATIONAL TRUST  
for HISTORIC PRESERVATION™

National Main Street Awards  
National Trust for Historic Preservation

## **2003 Business Leadership Award**

*Thomas A. Kiefaber, owner  
The Senator Theatre, Baltimore, MD*

### **FACT SHEET**

Everyone involved in Main Street revitalization knows that historic, independently owned movie theaters have virtually disappeared - not through some sort of economic Darwinism in a changing industry, but because independent theaters are almost always blocked from equal access to the flow of first-run films. Without equal access to the latest films that the chain megaplexes enjoy, historic independents cannot generate the revenue they need to keep the doors open and the crowds coming to remain the cultural hearts and economic engines of Main Street districts

Tom Kiefaber's grandfather built Baltimore's Senator Theater – and, for over 20 years, Mr. Kiefaber has successfully fought incredible odds – not only transforming Baltimore's historic Senator Theater into a nationally revered film showcase but also focusing national attention on the formidable obstacles faced by independent operators in a film industry dominated by national chains and served by national film distribution companies.

The challenges Mr. Kiefaber has faced over the years in keeping the Senator Theater operating have led him to explore and launch some new models for independent movie theater operators nationwide.. In 2002, Mr. Kiefaber bought and renovated a nearby closed twin cinema abandoned by a national chain, giving The Senator enough operational flexibility and bargaining power with the film distributors to secure first-run films like Harry Potter, Chicago, and The Matrix Reloaded.

But, that wasn't enough. Mr. Kiefaber has also founded a new nonprofit organization – the Main Street Movie House Foundation – to explore ways that independent main street movie houses like The Senator Theatre can remain independently owned and economically viable. With support from the Baltimore Development Corporation and other organizations, the Main Street Movie House Foundation's initial focus will be on The Senator Theater, its adjunct Rotunda Cinematheque and The Charles Theatre as demonstration projects that will serve as innovative examples to other independent theaters in Main Street districts across the country.

The National Trust's National Main Street Center awarded Mr. Kiefaber the 2003 National Main Street Award for Business Leadership in recognition of his tireless advocacy for historic, independent movie theaters. Mr. Kiefaber accepted the award on May 19, 2003 during the National Trust's annual Town Meeting on Main Street conference held in Cincinnati, Ohio.

To learn more about the National Trust's Main Street Leadership awards, contact Camille Inez at (202) 588-6140 or visit [www.mainstreet.org/awards](http://www.mainstreet.org/awards). For more information about Mr. Kiefaber and the Senator Theater, contact Mr. Kiefaber at (410) 435-3583 or visit [www.senator.com](http://www.senator.com).

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