

Opry family rallies in memory of Boehmer

By DOROTHY BROTHERTON
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Westbank Country Opry establishes award for founding member who wrote and sang hundreds of her own songs

Fans of Westbank Country Opry felt the loss of Shirley Anne Elizabeth Boehmer, who died on Dec. 10 at age 78, but her life will be memorialized by a special award.

Boehmer was a founding member of Westbank Country Opry and had been helping the organization for 17 years. She wrote and sang hundreds of her own songs, and friends said that cooking, baking, taking road trips and spending time with family and friends were her joys.

A family statement said, "Shirley was her family's rock, and her love was a cloak that enveloped them."

A celebration of life service was held Dec. 17 at the First Memorial Funeral Chapel in Kelowna.

Boehmer's passing had deeply saddened the Westbank Country Opry supporters and the Okanagan music community. At the Opry's annual meeting just a few days after her death, a unanimous vote of Opry members put into place the annual Shirley Boehmer Award of Excellence.

The award will be presented each year to an "Opry performing artist in recognition of outstanding musical contributions to the community and as an ongoing tribute to Shirley's tireless contribution to music," said the Opry statement.

The award will be both a trophy and a cash amount.

All community members, whether Opry members or not, are eligible to vote. You may cast your vote by emailing vote@westbankcountryopry.com or at the regular Opry concerts set for Jan. 25 or Feb. 22, which will take place at Emmanuel Church, 2600 Hebert Rd., West Kelowna.

The award will be presented at the regular Opry concert on March 29 at Emmanuel Church.

To view the eligible Opry performers, visit www.westbankcountryopry.com/artists.html.

They include Bill Bates, who plays Summerland bluegrass, Marty Edwards from Peachland, known for his tributes to Kenny Rogers, Pam Ferens, a local singer-songwriter who has performed in Nashville, Garry Jesperson, a senior who is still an active performer on alto saxophone and a vocalist, Janice Schlieff, known for country and gospel music, who has been a regular at Westside Daze, Nikita Afonso, George Angus, and many more.

Boehmer is survived by her husband, Ben, seven children, Jordin, Jennifer, Leslie, Noreen, Richard, Trevor and Courtney, 16 grandchildren, 15 great grandchildren and six great-great grandchildren, her first husband John Merrick, four brothers and two sisters and a large extended family.

Courtesy of

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— Boehmer family