

4 TL shops busted in e-cig sting

S.F. enforcement leading the nation

By MARK HEDIN

IN WHAT ARE AMONG the first prosecutions anywhere for the unlawful sale of e-cigarettes — a new delivery system for nicotine especially popular with kids — eight central city retailers are among the 15 busted so far in S.F. police sting operations targeting sales to minors.

Using underage decoys last fall at the urging of the Department of Public Health's Tobacco Free Project, police tested 80 retailers' compliance with a city ordinance that extends regulations against the sale of tobacco to minors to include e-cigarettes, which previously had enjoyed relative immunity from laws that were enacted before "vaping" came along. The targeted merchants were selected at random by a city contractor from DPH's constantly updating list of tobacco retailers — as of April, there were 924 in the city, Derek Smith, health educator at the Tobacco Free Project, said.

Fifteen retailers — nearly 1 in 5 of those checked — were cited for selling to minors. In the Tenderloin they were: New Princess Market (500 Eddy St.), Tobacco Barn (733 Polk) and Woerner's Liquor and Salem Grocery, both in the 900 block of Geary.

In SoMa, Rite-By Grocery (22 Sixth St.), City Wine & Spirits (805 Howard) and the Shell and Chevron stations in the 1200 block of Harrison also were cited.

"I tell the industry, 'We're not trying to trick you,'" SFPD Lt. Dave Falzon told The Extra. "We don't use giant kids or kids in nightclub attire. They never lie. They use lawful IDs or have no ID at all. If the person asks their age, they don't lie."

Falzon, who said he initiated compliance operations more than a decade ago, said that when the police are checking compliance with alcohol regulations, the decoys are older, but for tobacco, the typical age is 15 or 16. Many are the children of other officers, he said, or came to the program from high schools via their interest in law enforcement or criminology. They wear body wires and an undercover officer is present to make the citation should a violation occur.

The citation process is twofold: The store clerk who sells to a minor is issued

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MARK HEDIN

Tobacco Barn on Polk Street was cited for allegedly selling e-cigarettes to a minor last year and lost its license to sell tobacco for 20 days in March.

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\$100,000 ZENDESK TL GRANT

Tech Lab award 1st for global foundation

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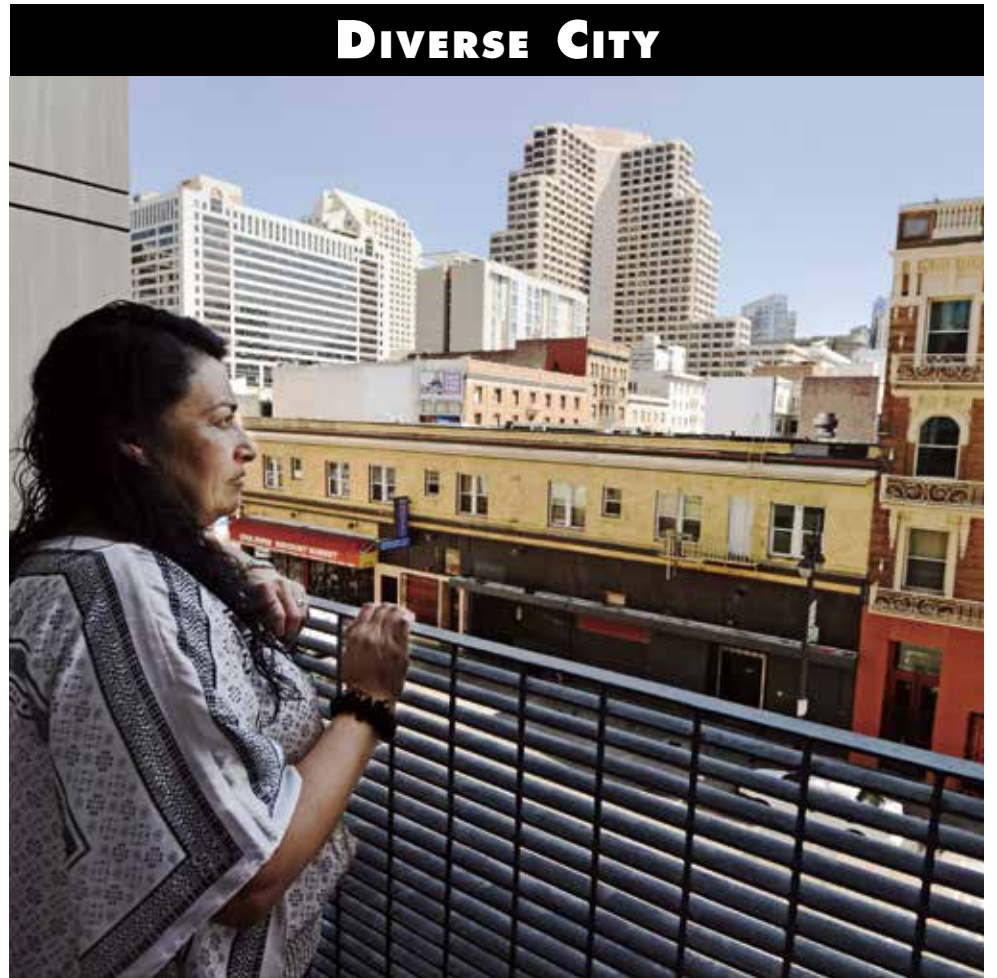


CENTRAL CITY

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DIVERSE CITY



Morena Perez can see the Tenderloin and downtown from a Taylor Street balcony on Curran House, the nonprofit family apartments where she and her children have lived for 10 years.

Latina with a cause

El Salvadoran single mother gives 'voice' to a growing influx

By TOM CARTER

PHOTOS BY PAUL DUNN

IN THE DECADE before 2000, when El Salvador was one of the most dangerous countries in the world, 216,000 Salvadorans legally immigrated to the U.S., fleeing the poverty-strewn, tropical country's aftermath of a civil war that lasted throughout the 1980s, and mounting gang warfare. It's still dangerous, and still sending immigrants to the U.S.

Immigrants, like plucky Morena Perez who came to San Francisco in 1993 as the war wound down, often fled to relatives. She was 22 and came to live with her sister, leaving her husband and baby daughter behind. They joined her here later, after she got settled and had a job.

Perez found employment downtown, but didn't know English, so she took an ESL course at City College, dropping it after a year because "it was too hard." She still struggles to find the right words in English to tell her story.

"I wanted to go back home," she says. "My sister said okay, I'll buy your ticket home." But Perez reconsidered. "I thought maybe I should stay and try to get involved."

Through the web of time and twists of life, Perez, a single, working mother of two

This story is one of a series in The Extra on the Diverse City that is the Tenderloin, a many-splendored center of cultures of color and ethnicities from far and wide. It's the most racially and ethnically diverse neighborhood in San Francisco. The residents of Curran House, TNDC's first family housing, are a microcosm of the Tenderloin's diversity. African Americans, Asians and Latinos each comprise just more than 25% of the Curran population, with residents coming from a score of nations. Morena Perez from El Salvador represents one Latino culture at Curran House and in the Tenderloin.

schoolchildren — her baby grown now and a mother herself, living across Market Street just blocks away — has overcome daunting odds to become an unsung stalwart of the Tenderloin. Before coming to Curran House, she separated from her husband who lives elsewhere in the Bay Area. She carefully measures her time among her children, job and her volunteerism that aids Latinos and the community at large. Her dedication isn't surprising, given that Salvadorans are known as "the Germans" of Central America because of their work ethic.

Perez and her family have lived in Curran House — the modern, low-income apartment building on sketchy Taylor Street — since it opened 10 years ago. Owned by Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corp., the 67-unit, eight-story building is a microcosm of the Tenderloin's diversity with residents from a score of countries.

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Jesse Cottonham
Human Performance
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Zendesk foundation launches with TL grant

BY JONATHAN NEWMAN

ZENDESK, which sells customer service software and was the first Market Street tech company to reach out to the Tenderloin, last month launched a global charity — Zendesk Neighbor Foundation. Its first gift: \$100,000 to St. Anthony's Tenderloin Tech Lab.

The 501(c)(3) foundation opens with \$1 million in 11 grants for neighborhood renewal in San Francisco and the 10 other cities where Zendesk operates.

As Twitter tax break's first beneficiary, Zendesk has negotiated annual community benefit agreements with the city administrator's office since

2011. Zendesk will not claim the gift to St. Anthony's in fulfillment of its CBA requirements.

"Growing up as a tech company in the mid-Market neighborhood of San Francisco has taught us the meaning and importance of being a good neighbor," said Zendesk founder and CEO Mikkel Svane. Zendesk has another office in the U.S. in Madison, Wis., and nine worldwide: Australia, England, Denmark, Ireland, Philippines, Brazil, Argentina, Japan and Germany.

Tiffany Apczynski, Zendesk's corporate social responsibility director and newly named foundation executive director, explained: "The plan is to spread the community aspect that began in San Francisco to the rest of the global

offices and instill a companywide culture of giving back."

For now, Zendesk will fund the foundation by contributing \$1 per month for every new employee other companies sign on to subscription plans for customer service platforms. As the company grows so will the foundation. Zendesk trades on the New York Stock Exchange for about \$23 a share, and the company has drawn nearly \$2 billion from the sale of stock.

"St. Anthony's is thrilled," said Karl Robillard, senior manager of St. Anthony Foundation. The \$100,000 will support operations of the Tenderloin Tech Lab, the 8-year-old progeny of St. Anthony's Employment Program/Learning Center and S.F. Network Ministries' Computer Training Center that pooled their expertise and equipment to help breach the digital divide in the TL, at a time when that gap was a deep, deep chasm.

In 2007, the Tech Lab quarters were cramped, and the computers were refurbished castoffs donated by Goodwill. Technology was ascending, but the boom of technology and its presence in the everyday life of the Tenderloin had not yet happened. As The Extra reported, St. Anthony's announced the lofty goal of serving 50 users a day in the new lab with a vow to "make technology less scary to neighborhood residents."

On a morning last month the Tenderloin Technology Lab on the third floor of St. Anthony's 150 Golden Gate Ave. building was in full use. In a series of well-lighted rooms 50 or so people sat quietly working at new, state-of-the-art, touchscreen computers.

Julia Cowan, the lab's coordinator of instruction, explained that some guests, as St. Anthony's calls those it serves, were there to catch up on the Internet news and entertainment, or to read their emails. Others, in a small room with six computers, were working with individual instructors to hone their computer skills, learning to navigate Excel programs or PowerPoint

platforms. The third floor had the calm, studied atmosphere of a library in use.

Classes of six are conducted in the Computer Learning Lab, where the new touchscreens flank the walls and a 6-foot monitor screen draws the eye.

St. Anthony's says about half of the lab users are homeless, living on the street or in temporary shelters. "We've conducted focus groups and most of our guests say they value the safety and calm of the lab. They can be productive and not have to hold in place the defenses they might have to use on the street," Omid Khazaie, assistant manager of the lab, said.

Anyone can use the lab. The basic instruction program meets four times a week in hourly sessions for three weeks. People who feel they've mastered the basics can enroll in the intermediate training. If not ready, they are free to re-enroll in a second go-round of elementary training. There's no pressure to move up and out. If guests are happy with their level of computer competence, they don't enroll in classes. They can use the computers as they please, reserving an hour of use, or longer, if no one else is waiting for a seat to open.

St. Anthony's doesn't view the lab as a standalone service to the community, but as part of the overall programs it offers. "The ability to use technology is vital to people seeking job training, resume building and, in many cases, re-entry to society. That's why the touchscreens are helpful. It's streamlined and it's the new way people will use technology," said Jessie Brierley, a communications associate in St. Anthony's public relations department.

Brierley estimates 100 people a day, 36,000, visited the lab in the last year.

"The number of smartphones in the neighborhood is growing and people are learning more and more about services. The latest technology — swiping a touchscreen — is the key. You can access multiple services in a new way," Brierley said. ■

S.F. pioneers e-cig busts

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a misdemeanor ticket, which can be adjudicated in community court, Falzon said. But the retailer faces the suspension of its tobacco retail license, typically for 20 days.

That part of the process is handled by the city Environmental Health Agency, a division of Public Health. Retailers can contest their citations at an Environmental Health director's hearing, before Dr. Tomas Aragon, who is the director of the Population and Health Division of DPH and also health officer of San Francisco — something like being the city's surgeon general.

Should the retailers object to Aragon's findings, they can take their case to the Board of Appeals. But typically, Tobacco Free's Smith said, "It's a pretty clear case," and most retailers choose not to fight their citation.

"I have not heard of anyone else doing this enforcement," Smith told The Extra. "I'm not aware of another community that has worked with the local police or sheriff's department to do a decoy operation."

Although The Extra found that 42 states have regulations barring the sale of e-cigarettes to minors, the only other enforcement action we found was a single citation issued in Queensland, Australia, where one retailer was prosecuted for selling a vaporizer.

In late March, the San Mateo County sheriff and San Bruno, South San Francisco and Daly City police conducted a sting on 187 merchants, citing, but not prosecuting, 19 for selling tobacco to a minor. Two were e-cigarette cases, the first such cases in the county, where the potential penalty is a \$200 fine.

Of the 15 San Francisco retailers cited last year for e-cigarette violations, Rite-By appealed its license suspension on May 6 and was denied, as was a store on the 1800 block of Divisadero Street a week later. Five more are mulling their options following a director's hearing, and five more have yet to have their day before Aragon.

Aragon has the authority to set a 90-day suspension at most, but has yet to do so, instead opting for 20-day sentences, during which the retailer must take all tobacco products off its shelves. The DPH does its own compliance inspections, Smith said.

June Weintraub, an Environmental Health program manager, said that four cited retailers had volunteered at director's hearings to quit selling e-cigarettes, including New Princess, Woerner's and Salem in the TL.

Smith said DPH had conducted two surveys of retailers last year and found that the number of retailers selling vaping products grew from 357 in January to 458 by mid-August.

The rising popularity of e-cigarettes, which allow users to get a nicotine fix without actually burning tobacco — instead, a battery-operated device ignites a nicotine-laced liquid — has pumped new millions into the always resourceful tobacco industry, and presented new challenges for those seeking to reduce tobacco's toll on our health.

"The reason the citations are new," Smith said, "is because the law is new." Last April, San Francisco adopted its Health Code Article 19N, which stipulates that e-cigarettes be treated just like traditional cigarettes in the eyes of the law. ■

A Fool steps in at CAC

Displacement is high on TL resident's agenda

BY MARK HEDIN

The Citizens Advisory Committee for the Twitter tax break has new blood. Faithful Fools' Sarah "Sam" Denison has joined the panel, and Rob Gitin will replace SEIU organizer Peter Masiak as committee chair. Masiak has held the seat for two years.

Despite the new energy Denison and Gitin bring to the panel, the committee seems likely to remain ineffective. In August, the terms of five members will expire, and supes' Rules Committee clerk Alisa Somera told The Extra no current CAC member has yet reapplied.

Eva Perring, after four years on the panel, seems eager to move on. Her seat comes up for renewal Aug. 2. She represents neighborhood low-income families.

The seat John Bogacki occupied represents seniors or the disabled; it expires at the same time, though he's been on the CAC only since October. The seats held by Steven Suzuki, an expert in workforce development, Brad Paul, affordable housing expert, and Antoinetta Stadlman, who represents community residents in general, expire then too.

CAC seat No. 9, for an expert in commercial real estate, has been vacant since 2013.

Given that at least six members must be present to constitute a quorum, without which the panel can neither meet nor hear public comment, the community's only direct voice in



CARMEN BARSODY

Sam Denison of the Faithful Fools was the only applicant for her CAC seat.

the process that has brought so much change to the hood seems likely to reach a new nadir of irrelevance.

In mid-May, the Rules Committee, acting on D6 Supe Jane Kim's recommendation, approved Denison's application for the seat Robert Marquez vacated in February. If approved by the supes June 2, Denison will join the committee at its next meeting, July 2.

Denison's seat is reserved for someone "representing a community-based organization or providing direct services to the ... area." She is chief financial officer of Faithful Fools Street Ministry on Hyde Street, where she lives.

"My hope and I think others on the CAC hope to shift the meetings away from routine reporting of volunteer hours and grants to hearings on topics stemming from displacement," Denison told The Extra. ■

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Salvadoran single mother heads family, helps others

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The American Community Survey, which works with the U.S. Census Bureau for population updates, says 14% of San Francisco's 2013 population was Hispanic, with half from Mexico, half Latino. The leading Latino nationality, Salvadoran, is 2%, or 16,700 here legally. Undocumented Salvadorans and other Latinos likely add thousands more.

Few Salvadorans live in the Tenderloin, Perez believes, as she's found no Salvadoran-owned businesses here. Census figures don't break out the "Latino or Hispanic" category into nationalities. Juan Carlos Cancino, a project manager focused on sections of the central city neighborhood for the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development, says it's his "understanding" that "most of the Latino residents of the neighborhood are from the Yucatan area of Mexico and Guatemala."

Perez, a handsome woman given to beautiful smiles and laughing eyes, grew up on a small coffee plantation and farm an hour outside of San Salvador in a family of 10 with four girls, four boys. The farm had cows and a horse, "and we could run around like little animals," Perez says with a laugh. Fruit was plentiful, especially pineapples, but the country's leading crop of the 1980s, coffee, is now only 5.7% of exports, behind knit T-shirts at 14%.

She left the farm at 14 to go to school in a town nearby but too far to live at home. The civil war was in full swing, officially 1979-92. It had a significant impact on California and San Francisco, too. She remembers the 6 p.m.-to-6 a.m. curfew

and rebels coming to the house and confiscating her father's two pistols.

Her father died at 52. With her mother in her 60s, the farm fell into disrepair, was vandalized, then sold to timber harvesters who wanted its tall pine trees. Thus ended Perez's precious vision of her childhood. Meanwhile, two of her sisters moved to the Bay Area.

Perez's American-born children have never seen verdant, mountainous, coffee-rich El Salvador. The size of Massachusetts, it's the smallest, most densely populated country in Central America. Of its 6.3 million people, 84% are mestizos, like Perez, a mix of indigenous Indian and European.

"I think it's time to go to San Salvador," says Perez, 44, reminiscing at the kitchen table of her two-bedroom, fourth-floor apartment. "I'm planning to go this summer and stay two to three weeks" with relatives. "My kids have to see where I came from. But I'm scared. And it's too dangerous to take them to the farm."

The war was fought in the countryside, but now in San Salvador, the capital, it may be as dicey. El Salvador in March had more killings, 481, than in any month in the last 10 years, an April 10 story in the Chronicle from its news services said, citing data from the National Civil Police. "At this rate," it said, "El Salvador is on pace to surpass Honduras as the deadliest peacetime country in the world."

"It's too dangerous there now," she continues. "Many bad people." She searches for the words. "Delinquents on the buses. Drugs. And the bad people know the people who don't live there, the tourists" (and see them as targets). "I want

them (her children) to see how poor the people are."

Poverty pockets are everywhere there. Per capita annual income is \$7,500, Perez's take-home is twice that. Malnutrition, especially among children, is El Salvador's leading health concern.

"Before it was nice," Perez glances at her son Jeffrey, 10, and daughter Tracy, 12. She has been such an ever-present volunteer at their schools and at the school of Salvadoran-born daughter Rosmi, 24, and Rosmi's daughter, Labelle, that Perez has picked up perhaps eight, she can't remember exactly, merit and appreciation certificates.

"And kids there (in El Salvador) eat everything," she says. "Here, they are picky."

The Tenderloin streets that she's known since moving out of her sister's place on Potrero Hill pose fears, too. She works graveyard shifts, 11 p.m. to 7 a.m., stocking the clothing and shoe department shelves at Target's Fourth and Mission store. Leaving home at 10:30 p.m., she walks down Taylor Street, past the 21 Club and the Taylor Street Center — the half-way house for former state prisoners — looking nervously over her shoulder. If she walks fast, she's at Target in 15 minutes.

"Sometimes I take the bus from Sixth and Market to Fourth," she says. "A lot of people laugh at me. But there are crazy people out there."

Early one dark morning when she got off work, a man began following her and tried to talk to her. Scared, she said nothing and kept walking. He was behind her until she arrived home, safely. She can't forget.



Still, her life in the Tenderloin is good. Her \$1,035 rent is up only \$50 from the \$985 when she moved in 10 years ago. She doesn't know how to make pupusas, a favorite food of Salvadorans, but weekly food drops to Curran House help add fresh fruits and vegetables to her kitchen. She and her family, as back on the farm, shun pork and beef but eat chicken and fish.

An avid volunteer, Perez tries to improve the neighborhood and keep it safe for schoolchildren. She has been a Safe Passage corner captain for three years, donning the yellow vest and carrying a walkie-talkie as a corner captain on the toughest corners on the 11-block route of oversized, yellow bricks.

She reports Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays at 2:15 p.m. at the Boeddeker Clubhouse for her 2:45 p.m. to 4 p.m. sidewalk assignment, her presence there discouraging dope dealers and shifty adults from hanging out.

"Having residents feeling as she (Morena) does about the need to be there is the key," says Dina Hilliard, Safe Passage executive director. "It's personal for them and everyone's responsibility, not just the police."

Perez is active in La Voz Latina, a women's and mothers' political activist organization at 48 Turk St. She has been at City Hall demonstrations as La Voz lobbies for better schools, a safe community, foot patrols, Muni passes, rental subsidies and affordable housing. And she has been a counselor and adviser to those it serves.

"She was on the leadership team, a small group of ladies from the neighborhood that were the face of the organization, alerting people to workshops, services and events," says Kelly Guajardo, La Voz's director. "To be honest, she gave me an orientation on organizing. And our leaders have been almost exclusively single mothers."

Perez helped lead the polling of 100 TL families to find why Sgt. Macaulay Park at Larkin and O'Farrell streets wasn't being used during Boeddeker Park's makeover.

Most said they feared what was going on outside the park fence, an iffy crowd of buyers and sellers of various drugs. So

La Voz decided to hold family events at Macaulay Park once a month, attracting 100 or more each time, sending the suspect crowd to other corners and boosting the mothers' confidence.

"We have been a voice," Perez says with obvious pride. "Some (Latinos) are hiding, scared. My job is to talk to them — we have places to go where they (officials) will help us. And also tenants rights," she adds, a topic on which she has become an expert. "I tell them. Sometimes the people ..." and she raises a hand and zips her mouth, letting the gesture make the point.

There have been a few Salvadorans at La Voz, as Latinos keep coming into the Tenderloin as "one of the last affordable hubs" in the city, Guajardo says. She estimates the TL Latino population at 12% to 25% and increasing. "If you walk around you can see it."

In the 2010 census, the Tenderloin was 20% Latino, or 6,255 of the TL's 31,600 population. In 2000, Latinos had been 16%. These figures are based on people responding to official inquiry by mail, which almost certainly understates reality.

There may be more drift to the Tenderloin from the high Latino population of the Mission, too.

Guajardo says Perez has had to cut back her hours at La Voz. "She has a lot on her plate."

Twice a week she set up workshops to advise newcomers of their benefits, services including legal help. She also helped TNDC's Lorenzo Listana distribute tenant information.

"I'd go door to door in this building and in the Tenderloin and SoMa," Perez says. "But I can do only so much. I stopped volunteering at TNDC and I only go to La Voz once or twice a month now. I say, 'No more! The weekends are for my kids.'"

On a Saturday morning, Guillermo Martinez answers her door. He has been vacuuming the living room. No one else is stirring yet. Coffee, sent from family in El Salvador, is brewing and he offers some to two guests.

Soon Perez comes into the room and then Tracy and Jeffrey. Daughter Ros-

Clockwise from top left, Morena Perez (left) shares a laugh with Tammy Walker, general manager of Curran House where Perez has lived for 10 years. Her son, Jeffrey, takes a sip of her coffee as daughter Tracy, amused, looks on. On a Saturday morning, Perez's boyfriend, Guillermo Martinez, talks with Tracy and Jeffrey about basketball. Afterward, they walk around the corner to Boeddeker Park where Jeffrey hits four out of five baskets. Perez, an avid volunteer, says she's cut back some of that work: "I can only do so much. The weekends are for my kids."

mi lives with her 7-year-old daughter in SoMa and works for Salesforce. Rosmi watches the kids weeknights when Perez is at Target.

Perez calls Rosmi "my amazing daughter" who finished high school at the Ruth Asawa School of the Arts while working part-time. Perez then was the head of household for her three children and granddaughter baby Labelle. How did she do it? she was asked.

"I am-a strong," Perez says, flashing a big smile and laughing as she throws her arms up to flex her muscles. Martinez has a big grin and nods approval.

Tracy and Jeffrey both play basketball. She goes to Hamilton Middle School, but last semester missed the deadline for getting in her medical clearance slip and couldn't be on the school team. She says she's good at making free throws.

Jeffrey played on the basketball team at Bessie Carmichael where his niece, Labelle, also is enrolled. The family attended all of his games. He transferred a month ago to the Creative Arts charter school at 1601 Turk St. and expects to play next fall on a SoMa team fielded by the anti-violence youth group United Playaz.

The kids used to be in a Curran House play group, but now say it's for "little kids." Their mother says: "They have school friends. But they know more people here than I do."

That's not many. Perez's hands have been pretty much tied up for the decade she's been at Curran House after separating from her husband. She says she knows people in the building by face but only five or so by name; four of those speak Spanish. She's content with her exclusive motherly focus.

"We are a close family," she says. They speak Spanish at home. According to the 2004 American Community Survey, only 1 in 20 Salvadoran families speak English at home.

Martinez, 44, also of El Salvador, is her boyfriend of "8½ months," he says, with obvious adoration. They were introduced by a mutual friend, began dating, and then "she wanted to kidnap me," he jokes, as they both crack up.

Many Saturdays they go in his car to the Christian Church on Bayshore near the Old Clam House, then to one of the half dozen Salvadoran restaurants in the Mission, El Majahual on Valencia Street being their favorite.

They don't patronize the half dozen



or more Mexican restaurants in the TL, as none is Salvadoran.

Martinez lives in Antioch. He's a repairman for Contra Costa Appliance, using the trade he learned in El Salvador before coming to the Bay Area a year before Perez.

At the kitchen table, they're all asked about their American dreams. Perez wants to take child development classes at City College and get a degree to eventually undertake a new career. Jeffrey's is a no-brainer, a basketball player. Tracy wants to be a doctor.

"It's interesting work." She pauses. "Or maybe work for the FBI."

Martinez doesn't hesitate to say he wants them all to live together as a family, and one day he wants to have his own appliance repair company.

A discussion ensues about basketball free throws. Jeffrey says he can make 8 out of 10. Tracy, who aspires one day to a spot on the Washington High School girls basketball team, says she can do that, too, but she's too "lazy" to go around

the corner to the Boeddeker Park court for proof.

With urging, the adults wanting them outside moving in the fresh air, the group decides to take a ball and go for the demonstration.

At the court Perez chats with a Latina, her baby in a stroller, a fellow Safe Passage volunteer. On the court, the kids trade shots at the foul line and Martinez fields the rebounds. Jeffrey sinks his first four out of five. But Tracy struggles, finally making a bucket after a half dozen attempts.

Jeffrey trots over to the deep corner to try those long three-point shots that get no backboard help. For a little guy, he's okay with the range and gets the ball close, showing promise.

"I don't know how he can do it," Perez says, marveling at her son. "He practices more than Tracy, and Guillermo helps him. He knows a lot about soccer and basketball and questions Jeffrey about his mistakes."

The workout breathed promise. ■

From El Salvador to sanctuary

The most dramatic result of El Salvador's 13-year civil war was the flight of nearly 1 in 3 Salvadorans from escalating unemployment and deepening poverty. Possibly 1 million headed to the U.S.

Refugees came up across Mexico, through tunnels, over rivers and desert to America, El Norte.

The U.S. government was not generous, approving only 2.1 percent of applications to immigrate. Those turned down faced deportation. But some U.S. communities stepped up and became sanctuary cities where city employees are not required to check the immigration status of people they serve.

The first, where the greatest number of Salvadoran refugees settled, was Los Angeles in 1979. Ten years later, San Francisco became a sanctuary city. Now, more than 160 cities and counties bear that distinction — 31 in California — despite a 1996 federal law requiring the officials to report illegals to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Department.

San Francisco's official policy is to ignore that responsibility.

Salvadoran Consul General Ana Valenzuela says 200,000 documented Salvadorans live in Northern California, her territory. She won't wager a guess how many are in San Francisco.

"It's very hard to determine general data because of undocumented people."

"Salvadorans want to come to California because it's easier on immigrants than some other states, and especially here in San Francisco," Valenzuela says.

In San Francisco's 14% Latino/Hispanic makeup, the leading three groups are Mexicans, 7.4%; Salvadorans, 2%; and Nicaraguans, 0.9%. And that's those who wanted to be counted. Two percent of the city's 837,000 population means about 16,700 Salvadorans live here. ■

— Tom Carter

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NICOLAS DE RUIJG
'He gave you love'

Nicolas "Nico" de Ruijg's path through life brought him from Europe to the United States, from the excitement of the mid-1960s swinging London to the comfort of academic life on the East Coast in the '70s and '80s. Then years living on the streets of San Francisco in an alcoholic haze before a lengthy final chapter as a tenant advocate and organizer and beloved member of the SoMa community and his adopted church.

Family and friends gathered to reminisce and honor him at a memorial service at Canon Kip, his home for his last 13 years, and again five days later at the Episcopal Church of St. John the Evangelist in the Inner Mission, where he had been a constant presence even longer.

Among the dozen people in the Canon Kip community room were his cousin, Carola, who had traveled with her mother, Trudi, from the Netherlands, in hopes of seeing "our special uncle" before he died. Mr. de Ruijg had been hospitalized with heart disease since September and in hospice care at Laguna Honda since February. He'd had a bypass operation in 2014, a friend said, but "really only got a benefit from it for about three months." He turned 71 in December.

Over and over again, people who shared their memories of Mr. de Ruijg recalled a man of tireless energy, kindness, enthusiasm and good humor. He held court every weekday morning at coffee get-togethers at Canon Kip, and for eight years was a tenant representative at meetings of the Human Services Agency's Shelter Plus Care Oversight Committee.

At Canon Kip, he kept his fellow tenants informed of goings-on in the community and made sure that no one took themselves too seriously. One of the workers there recalled through her tears how delighted he'd been when they visited him at the hospital and her regret about not having returned as she'd planned.

"He could've moved from here, but he thought this was home," his longtime friend Christopher Santos said.

"I called him my assistant," said Rev. Kathryn Benton, who presided over the memorial May 18. "He always had a prayer ready" at similar events she conducted for Episcopal Community Services over the past five years, she said. At Mr. de Ruijg's memorial, she read from Heraclitus and Job 14:7-9.

"He lived at the bottom, so he didn't take life for granted," said Robert Craig, an official at St. John's, a church at 15th and Julian streets, whose congregation is largely LGBT. "He almost died in the streets. He knew what was important and what was not. He treated everyone with equal respect, regardless of social standing. He would have lunch with the bishop and his wife and the next day help someone off the street. A lot of character."

Similarly, Craig continued, "It didn't matter what his finances were. He was always in a good mood. If someone said something negative, he would make it into a joke. He knew all the bus drivers and was comfortable everywhere he went."

"He gave you love when you didn't have love for yourself," Santos recalled.

Mr. de Ruijg, the youngest of four children, worked on ships as a young man. He met the late poet Ron Schreiber in the Netherlands, and their friendship brought him to London and then New York in the 1960s before a long stretch together in Provincetown, Mass., near Boston, where Schreiber was chair of the English Department at the University of Massachusetts.

When his relationship with Schreiber ended, Mr. de Ruijg shared an apartment in Boston for a few years with Santos and then moved to San Francisco. He worked as a tailor, at one point operating a fabric shop with five female employees, "his girls," Santos said he called them.

He was a fashionable dresser — pictures show him wearing flowing crimson robes — and adept as a tailor and jewelry maker, skills he put to use making children's clothes for pregnant women at shelters and in keeping the St. John's clergy's vestments up to snuff.

But Mr. de Ruijg struggled with alcoholism and was homeless for years. "Nico drunk was not the same as Nico sober," Santos recalled.

He tended to stick around the Castro, where he felt safest, Santos said, and a Noe Street resident whose name he didn't know allowed Mr. de Ruijg to sleep in her carport for three years, as long as he moved on each morning.

He remained friends with Schreiber, too. "When he was on the streets, he'd often turn to Ron for help," Santos said. Santos lost touch with Mr. de Ruijg after moving from Boston to New York, but told a story of how they found each other again many years later:

One day while walking up Castro Street after moving to San Francisco in 2005, "I saw someone at a cash machine who looked remarkably like Nico, shoulder-length white hair, a vest worn sans chemise and festooned with lots of rhinestone brooches. I was so convinced that Nico was lost to me, that initially I walked right by. But then I thought, 'who else in all the world dresses that way?' I still wasn't sure, so I waited for this Nico impersonator to finish his transaction. And when he did, he turned, and we stood there, face to face. And he said, 'Phu-uur.' No one else ever called me that. ... From that moment on, Nico and I picked up right where we left off, as if those 13 years were 13 days."

His niece recalled encountering him on one of her visits to San Francisco in October 1998. She worked as a tour guide, but had not heard from her uncle in some time, so suspected "something was going on." She came out of the Civic Center BART Station one day, she said, "and stood face to face with Nico when he was homeless." Despite his typical attention to his appearance, she said, at this time he was disheveled and dirty, his hair and nose a mess.

He would frequent the Martin De Porres soup kitchen on Potrero, where a woman named Abbey Lehrman took an interest in him. "Do you want to live?" she would repeatedly ask him. "One day, he took her hand and finally started living again." She was able to help him gain supportive housing at Canon Kip and "liked having him around because he was her success story," Santos said.

Although Mr. de Ruijg was raised a Catholic, he was drawn to St. John's. "The first time he came to our church," Craig recalled, "the priest kicked him out because he was drunk."

Craig, head acolyte at the time, invited him to join as an acolyte. By the time of his death, Mr. de Ruijg was serving in Craig's former role. "He was trusted above all others," Craig said. "We called him our St. Nick. He gave everybody what he himself sometimes never got."

Acolytes' chores are typically performed by children attending a church's school, Craig said, but since St. John's congregation is primarily LGBT, those

duties are generally performed by adults.

Pictures showing his mane of long white hair made the St. Nick moniker quite credible.

"He had a great sense of humor and was very loving and kind," one of his social workers said. "Nico was relentless in his quest to give back." ■

— Mark Hedin

ROBERT MOORIS
A gentle man



COURTESY CANON KIP

Canon Kip Community House resident Robert Mooris had the reputation of being a "gentle soul," "a quiet guy," someone who "kept to himself" — so much so that the May 13 memorial for the three-year resident revealed almost no personal information about him.

Rev. Kathryn Benton, co-minister of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, officiated at the gathering in the Canon Kip meeting room at Natoma and Eighth streets. At the front of the room, a table held a photo of Mr. Mooris, candles, a large bouquet of spring flowers and a goblet of water. Mourners included three of Mr. Mooris' neighbors, three Canon Kip staff members and Si-

mon Dinglasan, a social worker from Lutheran Social Services who helped Mr. Mooris for his last six months.

"Robert didn't stand out in a crowd," Dinglasan said. "While he did share some of his vulnerabilities with me, he was a fine, calm soul and I'm going to miss that calm."

Mr. Mooris died May 6, six weeks shy of his 58th birthday.

He died the same day as Nicolas De Ruijg — "Nico" — also a Canon Kip resident.

"I remember waking up that day to loud talking in the hall and hearing Nico's name," recalled Kim Benedetto, who has lived at Canon Kip for eight years. "I thought I was dreaming, and I was shocked later to find out both he and Robert had died."

Benedetto said that Mr. Mooris was always courteous to her when they'd pass, though "he had his moments." She remembered the day that he moved in — his mother was with him — and that most of the time he lived at Canon Kip he left the building early and was gone most of the day.


"I think he knew a lot of people in the neighborhoods around here and that's where he spent his time," she said.

Rosa Spinoza, Canon Kip case manager, called Mr. Mooris "a gentleman, who didn't fight with anyone" and always said hi to staff and neighbors.



After the memorial, The Extra asked Spinoza and other staffers about the significance of the water goblet on the table. It's related to the candles, she said. They light the way for the soul after death, and the water drowns any evil elements that might try to keep the soul from rising.

"And water is about life," another staff member said — a fitting symbol of hope for mourners. ■

— Marjorie Beggs



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