

Election posters for Daly, others still up illegally

Violators must pay for removal but DPW mum on the billing

BY TOM CARTER

FOR months, John Nulty had noticed the raft of election posters in the Tenderloin that were outdated, irrelevant, unsightly — and, as of last August — unlawful.

A city ordinance passed a year ago to counter visual pollution on utility poles and streetlights stipulates that 11-inch-high and smaller posters and signs can be put on them to exchange information, but they've got to come down in timely fashion.

Specifically, election posters must vanish within 10 days after an election — the Nov. 7, 2006, election, in this case. And who he found not heeding the law, Nulty said, were District 6 contenders Chris Daly, Matthew Drake and Rob Black.

"The posters are all over the neighborhood."

John Nulty
TENDERLOIN ACTIVIST

Neighborhood activist that he is, Nulty decided to take action. The morning of June 11, Nulty delivered copies of his terse letter to the Department of Public Works, the Elections Department and the Government and Audits Committee of the Board of Supervisors. The letter cited six TL addresses where posters on utility poles violated the ordinance. By chance that day, when Nulty delivered his letter to the clerk, board President Aaron Peskin was lingering in the main chambers. He took a copy and looked it over; Peskin had authored the legislation.

A few minutes later, during public commentary, Nulty complained to the committee that the North of Market/Tenderloin CBD, which cleans sidewalks and graffiti, was "not doing a good job" because it had ignored what he considered illegal eyesores. He also gave a copy of his letter to CBD Manager Elaine Zamora.

Three days later, DPW Assistant Director Frank Lee emailed Nulty that the removal was complete. He thanked Nulty for notifying DPW. He also pointed out that Nulty could

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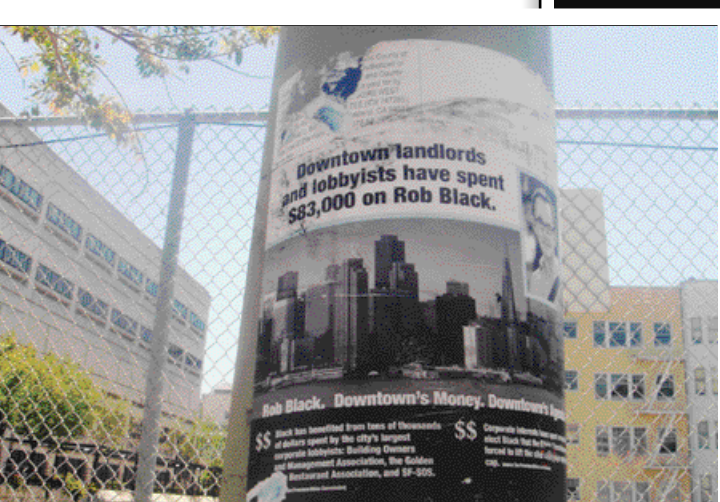


PHOTO BY JOHN NULTY

This Rob Black poster is on a pole at 355 Golden Gate Ave.

NO. 70
PUBLISHED BY THE
SAN FRANCISCO
STUDY CENTER

AUGUST
2007

LIFE TOUGH FOR WOMEN IN SROs

Ratio to men can be 20-1

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TL's Sanctuary has compassion

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GLIDE'S \$2.3 MILLION CLINIC

Doubles capacity of health services

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CENTRAL CITY

EXTRA!

SAN FRANCISCO

SUMMER BONANZA



PHOTO BY NATALIE PORRAS

Crystal Webb shows her form with the 6-pound shot put at a track meet this summer.

A track star at 10

Shot putting TL 4th-grader wins dozen medals

BY TOM CARTER

AT age 10, Crystal Webb made track and field history this summer when she put herself and the MacCanDo Tenderloin Youth Track Club in the national record books.

With an overhand thrust, Crystal threw a 6-pound metal ball the length of a good-size living room to become the Tenderloin track team's first kid ever to qualify for the USA Youth Outdoor Track and Field Championships. Specifically, the shot put event in the Bantam Girls category.

Boeddeker Park Director Robert McDaniels, known as Coach Rob, couldn't have been happier. It has been three long years of official team practices at the park, at Kezar Stadium and Ocean Beach, after ignoring skeptics who said a track team in the Tenderloin wouldn't fly. McDaniels, a competing high-hurdler still, after starring at San Francisco State in the mid-1980s, wanted to get neighborhood kids off the street and into something productive.

"Crystal is the first to go," McDaniels said. "She works hard."

In a summer where she traveled with the track team to a dozen towns, most in the Bay Area, Crystal qualified at a sectional

meet in Reno with an 18.2-foot toss. Two weeks later in Sacramento, she improved to 19.2 feet and surprised everyone by qualifying in the mini javelin throw, as well.

Crystal is big for her age, 5-foot-1, yet nimble and energetic, a busy, goal-oriented girl besides. She comes from a family of six. Two older brothers are off making a living and her third brother, Isiah, 13, is at home, a track team member, too. Her father is disabled and bedridden. Yvonne Webb, the mom, says Crystal is unusual not just because of what she accomplishes but because of her personality.

"She's very outgoing and has positive energy," Yvonne Webb says in the Boeddeker clubhouse. "Everyone who meets her likes her."

Yvonne Webb is Crystal's teacher through California Virtual Academy (CAVA) home schooling. Crystal takes school tests on her home computer, gets regular visits from a supervising teacher and goes on three field trips a month with other CAVA students. She got first place nationally among CAVA's fourth-graders in February when she creatively put her name to work with a science project on the crystallization of crystal groups.

She has two cats and a pit bull and wants to be a veterinarian.

Since age 6, Crystal was part of a cheer-leading team for the Seahawks, a PAL football team. But her mother decided a year ago that the discipline — demanding pushups from kids — was too strict and pulled her out. She found the MacCanDo club through Rec and Park.

"Coach Rob said do your best and there are no punishments," Yvonne Webb said.

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Ways to get it fresh

Dear Editor:

Thank you so much for your article on fresh food in the Tenderloin. It is good to know that a very basic necessity of life is given such good attention. Fruits and vegetables are medicine and if people have higher access to them, the neighborhood will indeed improve; not only because people are healthier if they choose to be but that more positive street presence will be encouraged as well. A good example of this (as you gave in your article) is the Farmers' Market in U.N. Plaza. It changes the entire energy of the place and provides MUCH needed resources for the individuals in this neighborhood.

I also enjoyed reading about LEJ's actions in Bayview Hunters Point. However, there are some aspects of providing fresh food in this area that you did not cover. One thing is a movement in West Oakland. They are trying to shift 20-30% of all sales in corner stores to fresh produce. I'm not sure what the status of this is. However, I do know that West Oakland has a diverse spread of food options because of the neighborhood's own ability to rally and face the challenge.

They have been able to take vacant lots and turn them into urban, mini farms (for example, City Slickers). They also have a van that rolls around the neighborhood and brings food to residents (it is run on biodiesel). The reason that the van (of People's Grocery) came into existence is because other vans were rolling through the community — Coca-Cola to be exact. They were giving out Coca-Cola to the kids in a community that had no access to fresh food.

I also did not read about another creative option — co-ops. As you can see Rainbow Grocery and Other Avenues have been in existence for about 30 years and are doing fine. If the community supported the creation of a co-op that employed local adults and youth, this place would be strengthened. People would learn more about food and themselves in the process of actually running a co-op. The co-op could start with fresh vegetables and fruit, whole grains, eggs, and dairy and soy products. It could then decide what other food items it would like to carry. This is the only model that will strengthen the community. And, it would be a big surprise to the entire city if it happened in the Tenderloin.

Lindsay Wilson
Resident Services Coordinator II
111/205 Jones Street Apartments

City will pick up hazardous waste free

Toxics specialist spreads word about new law

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

CYNTHIA Knowles from the S.F. Department of the Environment came to the July Tenderloin Futures Collaborative meeting with a positive message for residents about toxics: The department's program to help people get rid of hazardous household items, formerly gratis for seniors only, became free for all city residents July 1.

"Everyone's equal in this — home owners, apartment renters, SRO residents," said Knowles, the department's toxics reduction specialist. "But you do have to make an appointment — call 355-3777 — and you have to be home at the scheduled pickup time."

Even in a tight-spaced SRO, a resident is likely to have some of these hazardous materials: insect sprays, rodent poisons and baits, house plant insecticides, mercury thermometers, aerosols, hypodermic needles, bathroom cleaners, bleach, nail polish remover, fluorescent lights, lighter fluid, mothballs, batteries.

These shouldn't be tossed out with the garbage or poured down the drain, Knowles said. All need special disposal to protect the environment. The city contracts with Norcal Waste's S.F. Recycling and Disposal Co. to do the pickups.

On appointment day, the resident brings the items in, say, a cardboard box or bag, to the apartment or hotel entrance, and hands them to the driver.

"People who are elderly or unable to walk or carry heavy items should let the scheduler know ahead of time — they'll make special arrangements," Knowles said.

Knowles' only bad news had to do with prescription drugs, which used to be on the list of hazardous collectibles.

"Unfortunately, just three weeks ago, Norcal stopped accepting expired and used medications," she said. That leaves a critical hole in the program.

Last year, the Department of the Environment and others organized a Bay Area-wide two-day pilot with Walgreens Drug Stores to accept used and

expired meds.

To see if local Walgreens had continued on their own, The Extra called four in the central city. Only one pharmacist, at Geary and Taylor, said he still accepts dud meds but is rarely asked. The last time was four months ago. At the other stores, the pharmacists recalled the two-day pilot, but said if asked today, they couldn't accept used or expired meds.

After the meeting, one SRO-dwelling Collaborative member told The Extra he didn't think he could make an individual appointment for hazardous waste pickup because his building manager has such tight rules.

Knowles said her department would do everything it could to make the program work, including talking to managers, nonprofit developer-owners and tenant reps about organizing a whole-building pickup, if that's what it takes.

"The idea of general collection is great," she said. "It may be a function of reaching out to SRO managers, but from our point of view, it doesn't have to be organized — it can be individual."

The Extra asked Ron Hicks, TNDC's facilities manager, if his organization had any objection to tenants taking the initiative.

"Absolutely not," he said. "In fact, we're working with Department of the Environment right now to customize recycling collection for all our buildings, including pickup of hazardous household waste." Meantime, he added, individual initiative is appreciated.

In case it seems little things don't mean a lot when it comes to hazardous waste, consider the

old-fashioned, nondigital thermometer: It contains one gram or less of mercury. Environmentalists say that's enough to contaminate a 20-acre lake. A person who breaks a mercury thermometer risks breathing in and absorbing vapors that could cause neurological damage.

FUTURES COLLABORATIVE GETS THE GREEN LIGHT

It's official, said Tomiquia Moss, TNDC community organizer and Collaborative recording secretary: "Folks are still interested in the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative and voted to continue it."

In May, she sent an email survey to 125 people who've attended TFC meetings recently. District 6 in SF message board carried the survey as well. Of the responses, 33 said TFC is "a valuable resource to the community"; 21 said it wasn't. Twenty-one also said they were no longer active in TFC, while 18 said they were.

Summertime meetings? Thirty-six were for them, 24 again. And if meetings were held in the vacation-heavy summer months, 19 said they would attend; 21 wouldn't.

The meeting schedule — the second Wednesday of the month at 10 a.m. — still was okay for 30 respondents, but not for 20.

"Now we want to put together a steering committee," Moss said, "to decide future directions. And we want to thank Glenda, who's done a terrific job of keeping this informational and neutral."

Glenda Hope, S.F. Network Ministries executive director, has chaired TFC since its inception in October 2001. ■



CENTRAL CITY EXTRA is published monthly by San Francisco Study Center Inc., a private nonprofit serving the community since 1972. The Extra was initiated through grants from the S.F. Hotel Tax Fund and the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund. It is now assisted by the Kosbland Committee of the San Francisco Foundation, which funds the Southside coverage. The contents are copyrighted by the San Francisco Study Center, 1095 Market Street, Suite 601, San Francisco, CA 94103.

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Central City Extra is a member of the
SAN FRANCISCO NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION

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Women in SROs: Group brings safety, confidence

In residential hotels, males outnumber females up to 20-to-1 or more

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

BREAK the Silence, a monthly discussion group, tackles hard issues for women living in residential hotels: violence, being stereotyped as prostitutes, isolation, depression, sexual harassment, intimidation.

The group, part of the Central City SRO Collaborative's Women's Safety Campaign, has been meeting each third Wednesday since January, 4-6 p.m., at 259 Hyde. The Collaborative is a project of Tenderloin Housing Clinic.

"The attendance numbers are an ebb and flow, depending a lot on our outreach," said Leanne Edwards, volunteer campaign coordinator and a tenant rep of her TL SRO. "At our first meeting there were 25, at our last in July there were 17, but we've had as few as five or six. They're always diverse — mothers, single women, transgender women, seniors. The ages range from 22 to 60 and almost all are previously homeless."

Edwards says the gist of the meetings is "supportive empowerment," critical to a population that's an overwhelming minority

in SROs, at least in THC's master lease hotels. For example, at the Elk Hotel on Eddy, only four women live in the 88 units; down the street at the Jefferson, 15 women reside in the 110 units; and at the Vincent on Turk, there are 25 women and 178 men. On Sixth Street at the Seneca, 38 women live in the 203 units.

"We hear constantly about the lack of respect that women get from management and male residents," Edwards said. "There's just this assumption that they're all hookers."

She said she'll continue to collect info about the ratio of women to men in other nonprofit-owned SROs where the Collaborative has tenant reps — Crescent Manor, Lawrence Hotel, Ritz Hotel, Drake, Baldwin House and Hotel Hurley.

The SRO Collaborative trained Edwards, other volunteers and interns in facilitation skills. They take turns facilitating the meetings and share that role with any interested woman in the group. Group members also can take Collaborative training, if they wish.



PHOTO BY LUIS BARAHONA

Break the Silence facilitators seated from left: Liz Perry and Leanne Edwards. Standing: Amelia Cunningham, Genni Lo, Moana Miglietta and Sarah "Fred" Sberburn-Zimmer.

The next few meetings are Aug. 14 (first-time departure from the regular Wednesdays), Sept. 19, Oct. 17. For information: Leanne Edwards, 775-7110 x102. ■

Peskin takes action on posters; 311 takes its time

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

report illegal postings by dialing 311. He would be given a tracking number, and a work order would be forwarded to DPW, which would spruce things up and bill the offenders.

The 311 system, which is supposed to make government more responsive to complaints, was activated in February. A Mayor Newsom pet project since the mayor was a supervisor — 311 is designed to reduce 911's nonemergency calls and simplify access to city services, for which combined there are 2,300 phone numbers.

When the service expanded its hours to 24/7 on March 29, Newsom called it "a powerful tool for holding government accountable." The city expected 80,000 calls a month, "with volumes growing over time as constituents grow familiar with the service and public awareness campaigns begin this summer," a mayor's office news release said at the time.

Response was way underestimated. In April, the first month, 122,000 calls rolled in, according to 311 Executive Director Ed Reiskin. July's count, Reiskin estimated, would be around 170,000. The original estimate, he said, maybe didn't include folks who called city services and hung up before they got their question answered.

Nulty was happy about Lee's message. Momentarily. For when he went back to examine the poles, he found splotchy, ugly defacements. The posters had been glued to the poles, not taped or bound by string, which the sign ordinance stipulates. Scraping posters off, which DPW did, takes paint with it, leaving a mess.

So Nulty sent an email to Lee saying he looked forward to DPW enforcing the code section that charges offenders for the city's cleanup costs, plus a 50% punitive fee. "Would like to be advised when you have billed the campaigns and collected the funds for the removal from all six locations," Nulty wrote.

"But this was just the tip of the iceberg," Nulty said in an interview. "The posters are all over the neighborhood."

Nulty took pictures and emailed them to other TL activists and associates. Then he decided to take Lee's advice. On June 26, he called 311 with four more sites, all brandishing Daly posters — four were up on Larkin, one on Eddy. Meantime, the city repainted the scarred poles.

"Rodney," one of 44 customer service reps and the one who answered Nulty's 311



Supervisor Chris Daly poster at 50 U.N. Plaza.



PHOTOS BY JOHN NULTY

Candidate Matt Drake poster at 335 Leavenworth.

call, took the new particulars — Nulty could hear him typing — and gave him a tracking number.

"I'm not finished," Nulty said. "I want to be informed by DPW when these are taken down and (when the city has) collected for them." He cited the code reference, Article 5.6, Section 184.64 (b), and left a phone number for a call back. Payment is due from the miscreants 10 days from the billing date. Stiffing the city can lead to civil penalties.

On the evening of June 26, the TL Police Station held its monthly Community Room forum. Graffiti abatement experts were high on the agenda. Officer Christopher Putz, who heads SFPD's abatement program, said "sticker-ing," the random slapping of adhesive stickers — some the size of a hand — was very popular now on public and private property. It is pure vandalism, he said, and convictions would lead to probation and multiple repeats would warrant civil action.

In answer to a question about old political posters, Putz quickly replied, "I don't deal with that at all."

Indeed, the city won't lift a finger unless someone like Nulty complains. And the TL, as it turns out, has a disproportionate share of the city's visual pollution.

DPW's 15 staff abatement officers cover 11 districts, Jonathan Vaing, the DPW representative, told the group, and the Tenderloin gets 26% of their time.

"We depend on community policing, and then we send a crew," Vaing said. "Call 311 to get things removed. We get on it as soon as it's reported. There's a 48-hour time gap. More than 48 hours is unacceptable."

On July 10, Nulty, having heard nothing more about his second request, again

lengthened the tip of the iceberg. He called 311 with three more sites. Two were on O'Farrell and one at U.N. Plaza. All were Daly political posters. The reporting process took 10 minutes and Nulty got his tracking numbers.

"Is there anything else I can help you with?" the employee who answered asked.

"Is there a way to find out what's happening with the other request I had?" he asked. He gave her the details.

DPW has only one inspector for the whole city, she explained, and the posters can't be removed until they are inspected. She said the deadline to have the work completed was July 16 — three weeks from receiving his complaint. She confirmed that all of Nulty's previous sites were in the system, except a Larkin address that coughed up a blank screen. Surprised, she said she'd consult her supervisor later and then issued a new number for it.

Nulty settled back to wait.

On July 18, two days after DPW's deadline, Nulty trudged over to Little Saigon to check one of the poles. At 625 Larkin at Willow he beheld a disappointing irony. Slapped over the transgressing pole's political poster, and heavily taped, were two pink DPW notices. They announced an Aug. 1 City Hall hearing on changing the city's street cleaning times for 15 nearby sites, including Willow. The Daly poster beneath them was now deeply embedded. DPW had thwarted its own progress.

What next? Nulty wondered.

By July 25, he had heard nothing.

How then did he explain his early success?

"I embarrassed them," he said, referring to buttonholing Peskin. ■

Tenderloin's Sanctuary, a pot club

BY TOM CARTER

LISTENING to the Planning Commission's deliberations on ACT UP's cannabis dispensary was white-knuckling for Michael Welch whose pot club was also under scrutiny on July 26. Opposition can crop up anytime and the commission is particularly sensitive to community carping.

The Planning Department had recommended approval of the ACT UP dispensary at 1884 Market St. and Welch's Sanctuary at 1669 O'Farrell St. partly because they had zero neighborhood opposition until a man at the hearing unexpectedly went to the microphone. He complained that the smell of ACT UP's marijuana is "obnoxious" and fills his next-door apartment.

But that was thin stuff to the commissioners. By a 5-1 vote, they approved ACT UP's dispensary. Then after hearing from Welch about the good things Sanctuary does, including a support letter from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the commissioners' approval was unanimous.

Still, a case of nerves over rejection isn't good for an HIV patient, which Welch is. He doesn't look sick but he could have used a hit of his own calming medicine, perhaps the popular Bubba Kush strain.

"I was scared to death," he said. "I've never been to a public hearing and stress is a major factor in getting sick. It could go to AIDS."

The approvals brought to 14 the number of dispensaries the commission has okayed since Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi's legislation passed in December 2005. The measure set tougher regulations for the burgeoning cannabis dispensaries and required them to be relicensed.

But the licensing process is jammed up. Not one dispensary has been licensed under the new regulations. Dispensaries continue operating beyond the July 1 licensing deadline because closing them all wasn't a consideration. Besides, rules are still evolving.

Supervisor Michela Alioto-Pier's measure to extend the deadline to March 1 is to be heard for the second time before the supervisors' City Operations and Neighborhood Services Committee on Aug. 9. Her extension contains other important changes, including one that addresses the Big Oil-like profits common in the drug world.

"Sale of medical cannabis for excessive profits is explicitly prohibited," the measure says. It requires the dispensaries, "under penalty of perjury," to annually provide a statement to the Department of Public Health that they are compliant.

The measure removes the SFPD's role to inspect and approve a dispensary's security, work that Chief Heather Fong said the police wouldn't do anyway. So no dispensary gets a police inspection. None got the go-ahead from the Department of Building Inspection, either. But several received the necessary Fire Department approval. Now, to address ADA-

access issues, Alioto-Pier's ordinance adds the Mayor's Office of Disability to the chain. All of these departments have to inspect the premises.

"It has been a massive delay," says Larry Kessler, DPH senior environmental health specialist who oversees the licensing. "No club has been licensed because none has gotten the necessary other department approvals. Now there's an extension to March. A lot of people are waiting for exemptions from construction standards."

Major construction costs could knock some dispensaries out of business. But in an amendment resulting from effective lobbying, the Alioto-Pier ordinance provides for new minimum standards, if a dispensary can't meet the new construction standard for disabled access.

"(The measure) changes the equation," says Kessler. "It has to pass or there will be no permits. And it will probably be amended some more."

District 6 dispensaries that have received commission approval, besides Sanctuary, are the Green Door at 843 Howard St. and Mr. Nice Guy at 174 Valencia. The commission was set to approve the 120-24 Mason dispensary in May but the building landlord, CitiApartments, withdrew its support of a license. Tariq Alazraie, who operates the club out of his Café.com and has two other clubs, is trying to change the landlord's mind. "Regardless," he told *The Extra*, "we will be open until March 31, 2008."

Among the city's 30 dispensaries, Sanctuary is one of five called "compassion"—patient-owned and operated—cooperatives. Three are in District 6: Sanctuary, ACT UP and Hope Net at 223 Ninth Street. Sanctuary is a major supporter of Axis of Love, a compassion lobby for patients that has greatly influenced San Francisco and state marijuana legislation. Sanctuary serves about 90 patients a day. Welch estimates 80% are from the Tenderloin. Some come from the Financial District and beyond. There are 60 special compassion patients, most with HIV or cancer, who get free medicine once a week.

At a Better District 6 meeting on July 10, Welch handed out Sanctuary's two-page treatise. It says that many poor patients suffer because they can't afford the medical marijuana and Sanctuary's compassion program helps them.

"A medical marijuana dispensary has the potential of being nothing more than a storefront for drug dealers, or it can be a valuable asset to the community it serves," the statement says. "Many dispensary owners have already become millionaires in the few short years that medical marijuana laws have been in effect."

"The Sanctuary, however, is set up to run as a patient's cooperative and a non-profit, putting all its surplus income back into the hands of the patients that need it most, thus making the whole community rich and not just a select few."

On a recent Monday before noon, Sanctuary's compassion patients began coming in one by one for free marijuana. Doorman Luis Samayoa checks identification



Inside Sanctuary: The tiny one-room dispensary on O'Farrell Street is at right. The buds of varying pedigree are encased in plastic contain-
jewel-like on the buds of many hues. Most have contrastingly colorful

Welch leans on the aquarium, standing in front of some glass-encased plants that are just starting to grow nicely.



PHOTOS BY LENNY LIMJOCO

after buzzing them through the electrically locked wrought-iron gate and then through the storefront's door.

Patients enter a castle-like anteroom. A chandelier and eight crystals dangle from gold stars on the ceiling and catch the light. On one side of the room are a small aquarium, two stools and a little table with a volcano on it—a mixer-size appliance with a detachable transparent bag that heats pot into vapor for easy inhaling. On the room's other side is a large wall mirror and floor air conditioner.

By the door, a bay window love seat is usually occupied by Toro, a large black and white American bulldog. An SPCA adoption, he yields gracefully to customers who smile, coo and scratch him.

The marijuana medicine is in 17 clear plastic containers on top of a 6-foot-long glass case. There's no menu board. Welch doesn't believe in them. Patients explain their afflictions in detail to any of Sanctuary's half dozen employees, all patients themselves. Employees say which strains are physical, which are euphoric, explain combinations or "kush" blends, and what their personal experience with each has been.

Edibles and hashish are behind the counter. There's no tincture, the dark liquid THC laced with alcohol, because the health-conscious Welch won't carry anything with alcohol.

From the ceiling, two billowing red curtains he made are parted, revealing a 2-foot-high black sign on the back wall that says "Sanctuary" in big gold letters and in smaller letters under it "on earth as it is in heaven."

"We wanted it to look like a sanctuary," Welch says, "something pleasant and relaxing away from the hard streets."

A man with a long white beard, floppy hat and using a cane comes in. He immediately

o with compassion, wins approval



et is warm and colorful. Michael Welch is squatting, Shona Gochenhour is watching him and employee Maritza Salinas
ners. In the lower right corner is a movable illuminated magnifying glass used by customers to view the resin glistening
bairs weaving through the pungent leaves.

bends down to scratch Toro. He lingers briefly to get his medicine, turns, says goodbye to Toro and is out the door in less than three minutes.

Regular hours are noon to 8 p.m., seven days a week and several clients arrive first on Mondays, when compassion starts. They receive 1/8th of an ounce — 3.5 grams — free in a baggie, sometimes edibles, too, but not enough to last a week. If they don't pick it up during the week they can lose the privilege to someone on the 40-name waiting list.

"When we started I thought wouldn't it be great if the medicine could pay for the people rather than the other way around," Welch said. "To legalize and tax it would pay for a universal health system in a few years."

(NORML estimates that California could bring in \$120 million from medical marijuana sales based on 350,000 patients, the top current estimate, from \$2 billion-a-year gross.)

Welch came to San Francisco five years ago, sick with HIV complications. East Coast doctors had prescribed 28 different pills for him and the side effects were killing him. He was drained of energy, bedridden 16 hours a day, yet unable to get enough rest. A doctor he saw in Miami said maybe he could try pot as an option to pain pills.

He did, and it was some relief, but it was illegal and hard to find.

Welch had visited San Francisco before, and it beckoned. Here, AIDS Housing Alliance found him an apartment. It and other groups subsidized his rent until he got a waiter's job in the Castro. With a doctor's recommendation, medicinal pot was saving his life, he says.

He gained back weight he lost from vomiting and diarrhea, the pills' side effects. Now he takes three pills a day, two for HIV and one for blood pressure, plus he "self-medicates."

Welch expected to be dead by age 35. He's

41. And he's grateful for the West Coast society that saved his life and propped him up.

Neuropathy in his legs and a lack of stamina made long days tough and painful as a waiter. He wondered what his next move could be and asked Brian Basinger, president of the Harvey Milk Club, who had helped him find an apartment.

Basinger told him to "find something close to your heart and do it," Welch said. "He made it sound so easy."

A tall, middle-age woman in a long cotton dress comes in. She's happy and chatty as she goes to the counter. She brings a present for the dispensary, a Mickey Mouse cookie jar. She picks up her medicine and pauses to gossip a minute before leaving.

Welch began asking about having a not-for-profit pot club, a legal distribution system since the state's voters approved medical marijuana in 1995. His landlord owned a building across town with a storefront vacancy coming up. It was a small smoke shop on O'Farrell with 209 square feet that the owner had neglected and abused.

"It was a mess," Welch said, "holes in the walls. We didn't have a choice, though. The landlord was understanding and totally cool, as long as we follow the rules. And ever since we opened we've had a compassion program."

The dispensary didn't make money for eight months after opening in March 2005, a month before the moratorium banning new ones. But Sanctuary did well enough to extend compassion to food and housing. Now, three times a week Welch buys trays of fresh food in the Castro and takes them to Axis of Love at Ninth and Howard for afternoon meals for about 60 of the poorest patients. Sanctuary helps people find places to stay and subsidizes rents, too. Ten people receive rent help up to \$600 a month from

Sanctuary, he says. There's a waiting list of 14. Welch says he has saved four people from eviction.

"We ask for disability papers, rent receipts and contact the landlord and tell them we're subsidizing a part of the rent," Welch says. "We send the rent directly so it gets in the right hands. And landlords are very happy. We've had no issues with that and we review each case every six months. I hope one day to do more."

The architect of Sanctuary's compassion is Shona Gochenhour, 37, an employee who is also the executive director of Axis of Love, which she says has 1,500 members and 50 activists. She is a lead advocate for four of the city's five leading compassionate dispensaries. And although she facilitates several peer support groups each week, she spends the majority of her time influencing lawmakers.

Six months ago in a San Francisco café, state Sen. Carole Migden asked Gochenhour the most urgent issue facing the dispensaries. The State Board of Equalization had just notified the dispensaries that they were liable for sales tax. Some complied at once and others didn't, afraid of getting hit with back taxes.

The heft of back taxes, Gochenhour told the senator, would kill the dispensaries that put their money back into compassion programs for the poorest of the sick and needy. Migden's subsequent bill eliminates the threat of back taxes for those that pay now. NORML supports it. Axis of Love

activist Mira Ingram went to the Capitol to testify. The Senate passed it and it's now in Assembly hearings.

"It saves most of the collectives in San Francisco," Gochenhour says, who used to hand out sandwiches on picket lines in Wisconsin with her grandfather, a union organizer.

More recently, she conferred with Aliot-Pier on the ADA section of her ordinance. Gochenhour said the proposed new construction standards could bankrupt a number of dispensaries. The supervisor's resulting amendment provides new "minimum standards."

But what Gochenhour revels in as much as anything is the fallout from the Dec. 21 "on the town" compassion tour she arranged for Planning Commissioners Kathrin Moore and Christina Olague. They went to all the compassion dispensaries, she said, and the commissioners asked questions.

"Now every dispensary that comes before the commission gets asked if they have a compassion program and what other services it offers," Gochenhour says. "It's amazing for us to hear."

The two commissioners now have "become like rock stars" to the compassion movement, she adds.

"Chris Daly loves us," says Gochenhour. "We stay true to the course. He knows every single advocate at Axis of Love and he asks about how patients feel about this, will it protect our patients. City Hall is asking us! But you've got to be there every day and know how to get behind closed doors."

Welch is lower key but just as passionate.

"I never thought what I was doing was amazing," he says, sitting on the love seat with Toro. "I'm just trying to leave something behind. In my youth, I was a little more selfish." ■

RUDY JIMENEZ
Baseball buff

Rudy Jimenez's daily drinking buddies were a no-show at his memorial July 30, but he got a proper sendoff from people who didn't know him.

"He was a nice guy when he wasn't blasted and then he'd talk a bit about baseball," said Ray Boscacci to the small gathering at the West Hotel. "But when he was, which was 80% of the time, he wouldn't talk to you.

"Two or three friends of his would show up every day to go drinking with him. And he'd come downstairs in his wheelchair. I dunno, maybe he had the money."



The West's residents didn't see much of Mr. Jimenez, a two-year resident. Even when he was around and looking beat-up — with black eyes, Boscacci remembered — he wouldn't talk about that either, or his suffering.

Mr. Jimenez had been in the hospital since early spring. He died at Laguna Honda in July of liver failure, Boscacci and others figured, but the cause of death was unknown. He was 60.

"I'm here because I saw his picture," said one man. "Although you don't know a person here, you say hello anyway — it might make someone's day."

A Polaroid picture of Mr. Jimenez with his room number on it was on a table with a candle and small bouquet of flowers.

Boscacci said there are too many liquor stores around with cheap booze.

"You can get a half pint of vodka for \$2 and a quart of beer for \$1," he said.

Three groceries within a half block of the hotel sell alcohol. Two doors away, one sells hard liquor, too. That afternoon, during the memorial, a drinking crowd of a dozen was partying on the sidewalk in the middle of the block.

—TOM CARTER

PORTER VANMETER
Gospel singer

The mouth-watering aroma of Porter Vanmeter's soul food often filled the hallways of the Franciscan Towers over the years but cooking, good as he was at it, wasn't as close to his heart as gospel singing.

"We first met when we were singing in the Glide Gospel choir," said Amanda Burks, a resident since 1985 who lives on the fifth floor. "When he lived there at Hallelujah House we'd sing all the songs together. He was my closest friend."

A little alcohol, or sometimes a lot, only made the good times better, she said with a laugh. And when Mr. Vanmeter, a tenor, moved to Franciscan Towers 15 years ago, their singing continued.

But in the last two years, about the time Burks had her stroke, bad health plagued Mr. Vanmeter. He had trouble with water in his lungs and was in and out of Pacific Medical Center four times recently, friends said at his July 20 memorial. He died there on July 13. He was 65.

Mr. Vanmeter, who came from Detroit, held several jobs in the neighborhood until his health started failing. He stayed mostly in his fourth-floor studio, one of 105 studios, two-room and 1-bedroom apartments equipped with bathrooms and kitchens. Residents remembered that he loved to cook spicy soul food dishes in his room, how he kept his money in a sock and walked through the halls in his blue and white hospital robe, a cheerful presence known for his pet phrase: "Don't worry about it — it's going to be taken care of."

A woman fighting back tears said Mr. Vanmeter looked after her son and took him places, and other kids, too. She blew him a farewell kiss.

"He was a good friend," said Danny, who knew him for five years. "He helped me whenever I needed it and he was shy about asking for help himself. He kept to his business and didn't get into anybody else's unless he was invited. I loved the guy."

Burks, who uses a wheelchair, said anytime she called Mr. Vanmeter and asked him to go to the store for her, even in the middle of the night, he would go.

"He wanted to come home to die," Burks said. "When I called him he asked me to get the cops to get him out of the hospital. He wasn't quite right then in his head."

"But he was always there for me. And one day I'll meet him in heaven and we'll sing like we never sang before."

—TOM CARTER

MARLIN RODRIGUEZ
6 years at the Cadillac

Marlin Rodriguez's case manager at the Cadillac Hotel was surprised when a resident ran into her second-floor office and said that paramedics were in the building and wanted information on Mr. Rodriguez before they took him to the hospital.

But Mr. Rodriguez, originally from Nicaragua, a quiet man with a long black beard who could not stop drinking, did not make it to the hospital. He died in his friend's room in the presence of his three friends and case manager that afternoon, July 12. He was 46.

"The paramedics worked on him from around 12:40 p.m. to about 1:20 p.m.," said Marion Lopez, the case manager. "When they stopped and pronounced him dead, his

friends became very emotional," she said. "He died of a stroke."

Mr. Rodriguez, a six-year resident of the Cadillac, used a walker to get around during his final days after suffering from a fall. He got his food and clothing from Glide and St. Anthony's, Lopez said.

"He never talked about his past in Nicaragua," she said.

Mr. Rodriguez's memorial, attended by a handful of mourners and conducted by the Rev. Glenda Hope, was held July 30 in the lobby of the 99-year-old hotel. Initially, the service was translated into Spanish by Lopez. Later, Magali Echevarria, the hotel director, took over as interpreter.

A large ceiling fan whirred above the altar and a long table was decorated with a white embroidered tablecloth. On the table, three white candles stood tall. A large bouquet of red and white lilies was in the center of the altar.

"He was an alcoholic and I'm one too," a middle-age man dressed in a blue T-shirt and blue baggy shorts said in Spanish. "I feel sorry for him. We were not friends. We offended each other. I feel sorry about that. I know it's late."

Lopez said Mr. Rodriguez was survived by at least one child, a son, and had nieces and nephews in San Francisco. "When they heard about his death, they all came to the hotel."

"He was a Nichiren Buddhist and chanted every day in his room," said Echevarria. "He was a gentleman, a quiet-spoken person."

—JOHN GOINS

TENDERLOINHEALTH
a continuum of care

Outreach and Community Events August 2007


Health Promotion Forum
Topic: Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Spirituality
Speaker: Tony Bradford, Black Brothers Esteem and Ed Byron, Black Coalition on AIDS
Date/Time: Tuesday, August 21, 12 noon - 1:30 pm

HIV Treatment Forum
Topic: Living and Learning about HIV
Speaker: Nina Grossman, Tibotec Therapeutics
Date/Time: Monday, August 20, 3 pm - 4 pm

Client Advisory Panel
 Come talk with Tenderloin Health's Board Client Representative(s) and program managers about plans for Tenderloin Health. Also provide input on new services and how we can improve.
Date/Time: Wednesday, August 8, 11:30 am - 1 pm;
 Wednesday, August 22, 11:30 am - 1 pm

Volunteer and Intern for Tenderloin Health
Orientation: Sunday, August 12, 12 pm - 6:30 pm
 220 Golden Gate Ave., 3rd Floor
 lunch provided
 You must register for volunteer trainings.
 Stop in/call Emilie (415) 934-1792.

For a schedule of our current groups or for more information
 call 415.431.7476 or go to www.tenderloinhealth.org



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PHOTO BY MICHAEL NULTY

Notes on 6th St.: Positively fair

BOBBIE Webb, on tenor sax, right, and his Smooth Blues band lit up the 6th Street Fair Saturday, Aug. 4. The annual event drew about 1,000 people to Minna Alley, between Sixth and Mary to hear live music and watch hip-hop and rap performances on two stages, get free haircuts, eat hot dogs and cotton candy, get free bags of produce, play board games, and socialize with friends and neighbors. At 35 tables, fairgoers learned about social services that could change a life, or at least improve it. Among agencies: South of Market Child Care, San Francisco SAFE, Central City SRO Collaborative, Black Brothers Esteem, Tenant Associations Coalition, S.F. Mental Health Association and the D.A.'s office. ■

—MARJORIE BEGGS

C O V E R **EXTRA!** S T O R Y

Track star at 10, and that's not all she can do

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"And Crystal is improving because people are encouraging her. Last week in San Jose she ran the 50-yard dash in 8.4 seconds."

Track members try as many events as they want. They work out two hours on Wednesdays and Saturdays at Kezar and on Tuesdays at Boeddeker using machines and weights. Crystal says she spends 15 minutes alone on the "crunch machine" that strengthens abdominal muscles. On trips to the beach, her running and workout partner is Xavier, 11.

Additionally, Crystal is a prime performer in the McDaniels Dancers, since October a dancing and cheerleading squad of 20 girls trained weekly by her mother. They perform at Pop Warner football games, SoMa basketball games, awards ceremonies and cheer runners at the San Francisco Marathon's finish line.

"Yes, I am busy," Crystal acknowledges, sitting next to her mother while her brother tosses a volleyball around. "I do a lot of work. And I'm only 10. But it has gotten a lot easier. Things seem lighter."

Especially a 6-pound metal ball.

Asked to perform her signature cheerleading number, she bounds out of her chair and comes to attention in the middle of the floor. She starts with a whirling spin, drops with the splits, does a rotation, a pushdown, a kick back, a jump up and hands up.

"You've got to have a lot of endurance



PHOTO BY NATALIE PORRAS

Crystal Webb, left, is also a prime performer in McDaniels Dancers, a dancing and cheerleading squad of 20 girls.

for it," her mother says. "It's a minute-and-a-half of constant moving."

"I've been dancing all my life," Crystal says.

Asked what advice she'd have for other 10-year-olds, she answers with the aplomb of a Joseph Campbell.

"Follow your dreams and do your best," she says with a toss of her head. "That's been my motto since I was five."

MacCanDo funds helped Crystal and her mother go to the national meet at Benedictine University in Isle, Ill., July 3-8. More than 2,000 youth participated. Crystal competed against 15 other 10-year-olds in the shot put. Her throw was 23 feet 4.75 inches, her personal best by a foot. The winning toss was 27

feet 3.75 inches. The national record is 34 feet 4 inches, set by Amber Curtis of San Jose in 1995.

Yvonne Webb called McDaniels right after the event. Crystal came in third and won the bronze medal. She edged out fourth place by a mere centimeter. She finished out of the top five in the mini javelin.

"Then she put Crystal on the phone and she was crying because she lost," McDaniels said a week later. "I said, 'Hey, you got nothing to cry about — you put Crystal Webb on the map and the Tenderloin and the MacCanDo team, too!'"

Now a 2- by 2 1/2- foot handmade purple sign is propped up on a Formica table in the clubhouse. In yellow-painted, roughly formed letters it's titled "MacCanDo" and under that it says "Crystal Webb Awards." Below it are 12 medals hanging by their bright ribbons, the tangible sum of Crystal's summer of 2007. ■



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

Crystal and her biggest fan, mom Yvonne Webb.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SPECIAL EVENTS

Free piano concerts at the Cadillac Hotel, 380 Eddy St. August 10, noon- 1 p.m. Elisa Welch. August 17, 24 and 31 pianists to be announced. Presented by the Cadillac Hotel, Tenderloin Housing Clinic and the North of Market/Tenderloin Community Benefit Corporation. Information: Elaine Zamora, 440-7570 ext. 21 or ezamora@sbcglobal.net.

Safe Haven Campaign Launch Party, Sat., Aug. 18, noon-2 p.m., 201 Turk St., Community Room. Unveiling of campaign art logo contest winner, announcement of central city safe sites, refreshments. Campaign sponsored by TNT, Community Housing Partnership and Safety Network. Information: Dina 538-8100x204.

Mayoral forum and Tenant Associations Coalition of S.F.'s 9th anniversary celebration, Wed., Sept. 5, noon, 201 Turk. All mayoral candidates invited, refreshments. Co-sponsored by TAC, Alliance for a Better District 6, North of Market Planning Coalition and others. Information: 339-3327

COMMUNITY: REGULAR SCHEDULE HOUSING

Supportive Housing Network, 4th Thursday of the month, 3-5 p.m., 54 McAllister. Contact: Alecia Hopper, 421-2926 x302.

Tenant Associations Coalition of San Francisco, 1st Wednesday of the month, noon, 201 Turk Community Room. Contact Michael Nulty, 339-8327. Resident unity, leadership training, facilitate communication.

HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

CBHS Consumer Council, 3rd Monday of the month, 5:30-7:30, CBHS, 1380 Howard, Rm. 537. Call: 255-3428. Advisory group of consumers from self-help organizations and other mental health consumer advocates. Open to the public.

Health & Wellness Action Advocates, 1st Thursday of the month, 1-3 p.m., Mental Health Association, 870 Market, Suite 928. Call: 421-2926 x306.

Healthcare Action Team, 2nd Wednesday of the month, Quaker Center, 65 Ninth St., noon-1:30. Focus on increasing supportive home and community-based services, expanded eligibility for home care and improved discharge planning. Light lunch served. Call James Chionsini, 703-0188 x304.

Hoarders and Clutterers Support Group, 2nd Monday and 4th Wednesday of each month, 6-7 p.m. 870 Market, Suite 928. Call: 421-2926 x306.

Mental Health Board, 2nd Wednesday of the month, 6:30-8:30 p.m., City Hall, room 278. CBHS advisory committee, open to the public. Call: 255-3474.

National Alliance for the Mentally III-S.F., 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Family Service Agency, 1010 Gough, 5th Fl. Call 905-6264. Family member group, open to consumers and the public.

SAFETY

Safety for Women in the Tenderloin, every 3rd Wednesday, Central City SRO Collaborative, 259 Hyde St., 4-6 p.m. Informal, friendly environment, refreshments, gender sensitive to LGBTQ community and sex workers. Discuss how to make Tenderloin SROs safer for women. Information: Leanne Edwards, volunteer campaign coordinator, 775-7110, ex. 102.

North of Market NERT, bimonthly meeting. Call Lt. Erica Arteseros., S.F. Fire Department, 970-2022. Disaster preparedness training by the Fire Department.

SoMa Police Community Relations Forum, 4th Monday of the month, 6-7:30 p.m. Location changes monthly. To receive monthly information by e-mail, contact Meital Amitai, 538-8100 ext. 202 or mamitai@iisf.org.

Tenderloin Police Station Community Meeting, last Tuesday of the month, 6 p.m., police station Community Room, 301 Eddy. Call Susan Black, 345-7300. Neighborhood safety.

NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT

Alliance for a Better District 6, 2nd Tuesday of the month, 6 p.m., 301 Eddy. Contact Michael Nulty, 820-1560 or sf_district6@yahoo.com. Districtwide association, civic education.

Boeddeker Park cleanup, 3rd Saturday of the month, 9-noon, organized by the Friends of Boeddeker Park. To RSVP to work or for information, Call Betty Traynor at the Neighborhood Parks Council, 621-3260.

Central City Democrats, meets four times a year, 301 Eddy St. Community Room. Addresses District 6 residential and business concerns, voter education forums. Information: 339-VOTE (8683) or centralcitydemocrats@yahoo.com.

Community Leadership Alliance. CLA Community Advocacy Commission monthly meeting, City Hall, Room 034. Subcommittee meetings and informational forums held monthly at the Tenderloin Police Station Community Room. Information: David Villa-Lobos, admin@CommunityLeadershipAlliance.net

Friends of Boeddeker Park, 2nd Thursday of the month, 3:30 p.m., Boeddeker Rec Center, 240 Eddy. Plan park events, activi-

ties and improvements. Contact: 552-4866.

Gene Friend Recreation Center Advisory Board, 3rd Thursday of the month, 5 p.m. Board works to protect SoMa resources for children, youth, families and adults. Gene Friend Recreation Center, 270 Sixth St. Information: 538-8100 x202

Mid-Market Project Area Committee, 2nd Wednesday of the month, 5:30 p.m., Ramada Hotel, 1231 Market. Contact Carolyn Diamond, 362-2500. Market Street redevelopment on Fifth to Tenth streets.

North of Market Planning Coalition, 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6 p.m., 301 Eddy. Call: 820-1412. Neighborhood planning.

North of Market/Tenderloin Community Benefit District, 1st Thursday of the month, noon. Call Elaine Zamora, 440-7570.

SoMa Leadership Council, 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6 p.m., The Arc, 1500 Howard St. at 11th. Emphasizes good planning and good government to maintain a diverse, vibrant, complete neighborhood. Contact: Jim Meko, 624-4309 or jim.meko@comcast.net.

South of Market Project Area Committee, 3rd Monday of the month, 6 p.m., 1035 Folsom, between 6th & 7th. Health, Safety and Human Services Committee meets monthly on the first Tuesday after the first Monday, 1035 Folsom, noon. Information: 487-2166 or www.sompac.com.

Tenderloin Futures Collaborative, 2nd Wednesday of the month, 10 a.m., Tenderloin Police community room, 301 Eddy. Call at 358-3956 for information. Network of residents, nonprofits and businesses sharing information and taking on neighborhood development issues.

SENIORS AND DISABLED

Mayor's Disability Council, 3rd Friday of the month, 1-3 p.m., City Hall, Rm. 400. Call: 554-6789. Open to the public.

Senior Action Network, general meeting, second Thursday, 10 a.m.-noon, St. Mary's Cathedral. Monthly committee meetings, 965 Mission #700: Pedestrian Safety, third Wednesday, 10 a.m.; Senior Housing Action, third Wednesday, 1:30; Information: 546-1333 and www.senioractionnetwork.org.

SUPERVISORS' COMMITTEES

Budget and Finance Committee Daly, Duffy, Ammiano, Mirkarimi, Elsbernd, Wednesday, 1 p.m.

Land Use Committee Maxwell, Sandoval, McGoldrick, Monday, 1 p.m.

Glide, partners open \$2.3 million health clinic

BY TOM CARTER

GLIDE Health Services held a grand "re-opening" in July of its community health clinic, after a \$2.3 million renovation into a dazzling state-of-the-art facility in the harsh heart of the Tenderloin. It's expected to annually serve 6,500 residents, double the previous caseload.

The new 4,100-square-foot clinic on the sixth floor of Glide's offices at 330 Ellis St. is roughly the same size as the old clinic on the fourth floor but has more rooms.

Glide Health Services and its partners Catholic Healthcare West, St. Francis Memorial Hospital, UCSF School of Nursing, plus multiple donors and public funds, are responsible for the now 10-year-old clinic. Open Monday through Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., the clinic is a training ground for UCSF nurses who see upward of 80 patients a day. More than 60% of the clients are homeless.

"It's the palace on the sixth floor," said Glide's new CEO, Willa Seldon, at the July 13 news conference. The clinic's reception area was crowded with several dozen staff and health care representatives.

"We're striving to create a healthy community that improves spiritual, physical and emotional health in order to break the multigenerational cycle of poverty and low self-esteem," she said.

Built over nine months, the clinic has seven medical exam rooms, four mental health therapy rooms, two complementary care rooms, two HIV counseling rooms and a nursing case management office.

"We can offer an integrated approach and wrap the client in a net of services under one roof," said Patricia Dennehy, director of Glide Health Services. Plus, there's more privacy, she said.

The Rev. Cecil Williams, Glide Memorial Methodist Church's minister, was the catalyst for the collaboration.

"Until I had to go and get taken care of myself,"



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

Ribbon cutters: (from left) Lloyd Dean of Catholic Healthcare West, Tom Hennessey of St. Francis Hospital, Kathleen Dracup of UCSF's School of Nursing and from Glide, Jan Mirikitani, Willa Seldon and the Rev. Cecil Williams.

he said, he didn't know how important a state-of-the-art-clinic was. He said he is successfully battling to keep his cholesterol count down.

"This is a proud day," Williams said. "Thousands will come through these doors. We're making history because we care."

Although operational, the clinic still needs \$500,000.

"We'll be knocking on doors," Williams said.

The clinic has a \$2 million-a-year budget and a staff of 25.

Janice Mirikitani, Williams' wife and founding president of Glide Foundation, recalled the early days when Glide was trying to raise the health consciousness in the neighborhood.

"We held raffles to get people in here — people weren't interested in their health," she said. "Twenty-five years ago, we gave 15 women mammograms in the parking lot."

Dr. David Smith, founder of the Haight Ashbury Free Medical Clinic, presented the clinic with a check for an undisclosed amount. ■