

# Nonprofits brace for 'Mega RFP'

Behavioral Health  
putting virtually  
all contracts to bid

BY HEIDI SWILLINGER

SAN Francisco's behavioral health care system has taken a pounding under Mayor Newsom in recent months. Funding for services has been slashed by nearly \$4 million since the year began, and he's ordered another \$24 million to be lopped off in his 2009-10 budget.

On top of this, a shakeout of unprecedented proportions is looming, with 161 providers gearing up to answer Community Behavioral Health Services' "Mega RFP" — a request for proposals that essentially puts almost all of their contracts out to bid. There are more than five dozen behavioral health programs in the Tenderloin.

In a letter to CBHS contractors June 11, Barbara Garcia, deputy director of health in charge of Community Programs, said that the 2009-10 budget her department sent to the Board of Supervisors "includes a \$4 million reduction to mental health and substance abuse services to be achieved through the RFP." She said the \$4 million reduction is included in the \$24 million service cuts in Newsom's proposed budget. The reduction, which is annualized, applies to contracts through June 2010. After that it doubles for a total cut of \$8 million in fiscal year 2010-11.

**"We're  
concerned  
about the social  
safety net."**

Jackie Jenks  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
HOSPITALITY HOUSE

Virtually the city's entire Behavioral Health Services system will be put out for bid when the Mega RFP is issued in early July, says Kavoos Bassiri, chair of San Francisco Mental Health Contractors Association and CEO of Richmond Area Multi-Services, a nonprofit mental health agency.

The Health Department's Community Programs division contracts with 161 city agencies to provide residential and outpatient mental health care, self-help, substance abuse treatment, homeless services, and multilingual and culturally sensitive outreach programs. Sixty percent of the division's contractors, including San Francisco Study Center, are nonprofits. The rest are managed by civil servants.

The Mega RFP is new for the department, according to Garcia. Contracts are limited by City Charter to 10 years at most, but she says DPH follows a "best practices" policy of requiring new RFPs "every three to five years or so." Garcia says they tend to cover broad areas of service — last year, for instance, an RFP was issued for all the city's methadone programs. But she said no other Mega RFP — so named because it covers virtually all CBHS services — has been issued during her 13-year tenure.

Behavioral Health contractors that fail to meet criteria spelled out in the Mega RFP will lose funding; some may have to shut their doors completely. "We don't know what services will come out at the other

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

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## PARK WITHOUT PEOPLE

Boeddeker  
usually locked

PAGE 2

## CALLING ALL POETS



'Ground Zero'  
at the 21 Club

PAGE 3



## 45-YEAR WAR WITH TOBACCO

Milestones  
of government  
regulation

PAGE 7

# CENTRAL CITY

# EXTRA

SAN FRANCISCO

## SPECIAL REPORT



PHOTO BY BOB GORDON

Bus poster produced by the LGBT Tobacco Education Partnership, a Tobacco Free Coalition member, helped push passage of the 2008 ban on selling cigarettes in stand-alone drugstores.

# S.F. VS. TOBACCO

How city controls  
have evolved  
in 19-year effort

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

THE queue of 33 people waiting to have their say stretched to the back of the Board of Supervisors chambers. Notes in hand, they prepared to give public comment, pro and con, on file 80438, San Francisco's latest proposed tobacco

control ordinance, which would give people living, working and visiting here more protection from secondhand smoke.

It was a year ago, and the ordinance — still stuck today in legislative limbo 14 months after central city Supervisor Chris Daly introduced it — is a potpourri of bans, some new, others introduced to close loopholes in existing local and state laws.

The ordinance would make it illegal to smoke in all San Francisco businesses and bars, in the common areas of all housing complexes — SROs, apartments, condos and projects — within 20 feet of entrances to privately owned commercial buildings, in tourist hotels and homeless shelters, at charity bingo games and farmers' markets, in restaurants' outdoor dining areas, in waiting areas such as ATM and movie ticket lines, and even in tobacco shops.

"I think you need to leave some locations alone," deadpanned Joe Barron, co-owner of Grant's Tobacconists, a lower Market Street shop that opened during the Gold Rush. Still, Barron told the supervisors at the City Operations and Neighborhood Services Committee meeting in July 2008, that he approves of much of the ordinance.

Others did not. "The 20-foot rule puts our customers out on the street," objected Paul Navarro, a bar owner, who also questioned what he considered a piecemeal approach to legislating smoking. "If you don't want smokers, just ban smoking entirely."

"You're criminalizing [smoking]," said Kay Griffin, who didn't identify her affiliation. "It's a snitch law, with selective enforcement. I can't believe this is what city government has come down to."

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



PHOTO COURTESY CHINESE PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION

At a 1997 rally, Chinese Progressive Association advocates pressure the World Health Organization on global tobacco controls.

# GOOD NEWS for...

**HOMELESS AND SENIORS** The number of new studios and apartments for the neighborhood's neediest residents took a huge jump in June with two ribbon-cuttings. The nine-story Arnett Watson Apartments at 650 Eddy St., a \$33 million project developed by Community Housing Partnership and TNDC, has 36 studios, 33 one-bedroom and 14 two-bedroom apartments for formerly homeless individuals and families. It's named for a Coalition on Homelessness advocate who died in 2003 and was an original CHP tenant. The 110 units at 990 Polk St. — 81 studios and 29 one-bedrooms, a \$36 million project — will house formerly homeless and seniors who earn less than the Bay Area median income of \$33,000. The nine-story building, on land purchased in 2000 for \$3.2 million, is a TNDC and Citizens Housing Corp. joint development.



990 Polk Street

Citizens Housing will manage the property; Lutheran Social Services and the city's Dept. of Public Health will provide tenant services. The new building is one of the first three in the state to use Proposition 63 housing program funds from the 2004 Mental Health Services Act to defray costs. The other buildings are in Rohnert Park and Santa Barbara. The 990 Polk developers got \$1 million in MHSA funds to build 10 units specifically for the mentally ill homeless.

**MUSIC LOVERS** People in Plazas' outdoor summer concerts in the Tenderloin, in years past held midday in Boeddeker Park, this year move to two new locations at later times, 6 p.m. Thursdays. The plaza in front of 83 McAllister, the former Book Concern Building just off Market Street, will be the venue for the July 16 concert — by the Celtic rock group Blue on Green — and, on Aug. 13, the bluesy jazzers Presence Felt. Dolmen Property Group, the new owner of the Hibernia Bank building at 1 Jones, will build a stage in front of the venerable landmark for the Sept. 17 Smooth Blues concert. Info: peopleinplazas.org

**ERRATUM:** Nominees for Alliance for a Better District 6's Women of the Year Awards can live or work in the community.

# Boeddeker goes begging

## *It's become a park without people*

BY TOM CARTER

THE Tenderloin community is staying away from reopened Boeddeker Park. Its children's playground area, which the Neighborhood Parks Council's annual report card gives a D, is going empty, as well.

Park leaders agreed at the June 11 the Friends of Boeddeker Park meeting that the new, shorter hours are being ignored.

"Unfortunately, the perception is the park isn't open when people are up and active," said Steve Cismowski, Rec and Park area manager. "And the word isn't out to the children. Rec and Park needs to do outreach."

But no solution came forth at the meeting, although CBD Director Elaine Zamora volunteered to "get the word out." She planned to write to after-school programs and other family and youth groups announcing the new hours and explaining the playground's security plan, she said later.

The hours were established May 26. The park is to be open weekdays 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. for adults and the playground from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. for kids accompanied by adults. The park is closed weekends. Many residents have stopped going to the park for the past two months because it was usually locked.

Boeddeker Friends Chair Betty Traynor said she had applied to the San Francisco Parks Trust for a \$1,500 grant to open the park for "a couple of Saturdays" over several months. June 29 she said the Friends

were awarded \$1,300.

Park Director Rob McDaniels is there weekday mornings but leaves at 1 p.m. to run children's programs at Tenderloin Rec Center. Capt. Gary Jimenez reiterated his pledge that police would patrol the children's area twice an hour weekday afternoons.

Cismowski said the children's hours would expand to 7 p.m. during the summer. But, he added, "We're opening a place that nobody wants to come to," and referred to the playground's "failing grades" over the years from the Neighborhood Parks Council.

The citywide nonprofit's 2008 Playgrounds Report Card gave Boeddeker a D. The report, using national standards, was critical of the children's area for subpar play equipment conditions, cleanliness, sight lines for supervision, quality of surface fill such as sand and number of trash cans. Twenty-five others among the city's 125 playgrounds got Ds and Fs. Half the total got As and Bs.

Rec and Park's Maintenance Standards evaluation last year from 2008 July to Sept. 30 gave the Boeddeker children's area a slightly higher grade of 72.86%.

Cismowski said he hoped the unattractiveness of the park's Eddy Street gate leading to the children's playground could be made more inviting for kids.

"Parents' top concern is safety, and they are reluctant to release them to here," said Jimenez. "We need volunteers and parents from the neighborhood and I don't know

how to reach them."

Volunteer monitors for the children's area would have to be screened by Rec and Park and, by law, fingerprinted. A Glide Methodist Memorial Church representative, Paul Blaney, who has offered volunteers before, said he had "nine members ready to volunteer now." But no plan was in place by June 30.

Jimenez urged quick action to get kids into the park because street people move in if it's open and no one's there, and claim territorial rights, despite the gate's posted restriction for children's use only. "They get embedded and it's hard to get them out," he said.

Another item of disappointing news was that Koret Foundation had not renewed its grant for Boeddeker Park to be included in the People in Plazas summer music program. Traynor said she didn't find that out until too late to fundraise for it.

People in Plazas Program Director Lynn Valente told The Extra later in an interview that she got Koret's news just before the July-August-September schedule for 145 downtown concerts went to press.

"We knew it wouldn't last forever but this came as a surprise," Valente said. "We didn't have time to do anything about it. We're grateful for the eight years Boeddeker got the directors' grant and already I'm working to get it back for next year."

Boeddeker's Friday concerts were staged at noon over the three months. Each cost about \$1,000 to produce, Valente said. ■

## OBITUARIES

### ANNA PRILL Restaurateur

The Europa restaurant, just outside the Presidio's Lombard gate, was a popular destination for Czech and German fare in the 1970s and '80s. Besides the food and the atmosphere, a big draw was Anna Prill, "a cute waitress in her blue-and-white apron," recalled Marge Angelo, Ms. Prill's longtime friend.

Ms. Prill not only owned the restaurant with her husband, they had a house on Diamond Heights and other property in the city.

Ms. Angelo was among the 20 people who came to the Cambridge Hotel June 2 to honor Ms. Prill, who died May 23 at age 64. She had moved into the hotel a year before, directly from the shelter that housed her when homelessness became too difficult — she was in a wheelchair, one leg lost to diabetes.

Many Tenderloin residents, like Ms. Prill, have had precipitous declines in their lives. Her divorce

brought hard financial times that were complicated by physical ailments. She refused treatment for her infected toe; then, to save her life, the county had to get durable power of attorney to amputate her leg.

"I feel so sorry for all the reversals in her life, but it still was a blessing to know her," Ms. Angelo said. "She was my daughter's and my grandson's godmother, always a kind person and very generous."

Another friend, Sue Eldredge, who met Ms. Prill 32 years ago in a Bible reading group, remembered how she "walked into a room and lighted it up — and she always had flowers in her hair."

Those whose acquaintance with Ms. Prill dated only from her stay at the Cambridge knew her as a compassionate, smiling, devilish extrovert, despite her physical disabilities.

"She spent a lot of time in this community room and was involved in all our activities and went to City Hall protests," said Natalie Swenson, the hotel's tenant services supervisor. "But she also told hilarious jokes — sometimes inappropriate — and she just loved to eat, three big meals a day."

"And more," piped up a man at the back of the room. "And she sometimes pinched men's butts."

Ron Santos, 13 years at the Cambridge and president of its tenant council, said Ms. Prill loved to play bingo at the hotel's monthly and even cooked some for fellow residents. "She cooked Slavic-style, with lots of vinegars and fermented vegetables. When I visited her in the hospital and asked what I could bring, all she wanted was pickles and sauerkraut."



Ms. Prill's deep faith was well-known to her friends and service providers. Her memorial ended with a spiritual, sung by resident Mama Tracy, eyes closed and swaying. ■

—MARJORIE BEGGS

CENTRAL CITY  
**EXTRA!**  
SAN FRANCISCO

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A COMMUNITY SERVICE

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# Help wanted: Poets in the central city

BY ED BOWERS

POETRY has just about reached the end of its tether in this country; the poem recited at the president's Inaugural Address was so mediocre I wanted to puke. There was nothing wrathful or peaceful about it. It was just dull, which is what I suppose most people want.

Some months back, six people standing at Taylor and Turk, where I have hung out for eight years smoking cigarettes outside my favorite dive bar in the Tenderloin, the 21 Club, were shot in a drive-by shooting, one killed, five injured.

Buddhism is about transforming fecal matter into flora and fauna, ignorance into wisdom, and this romantic movie star gangster idiocy with shooting people has got to be transformed.

I didn't think it was funny when Martin Luther King got shot, or Malcolm X, and I am not amused either by the anonymous dead whose lives have been taken by cowardly pop-gun punks who are nothing but low-level corporate executives ready to sell out the human race for a buck and underpay their employees who boost their poison on the street.

This must be stopped. It is too

stupid. Stupid is boring.

I want to invite poets from the Bay Area to come to the 21 Club and be the internal representatives of the unity between peaceful and wrathful energy and to accomplish a synthesis of wisdom and compassion that transforms the Tenderloin GROUND ZERO into a work of art, and causes everyone in the bar to have a lot of fun.

Is that too much to ask? It's simple. Read a poem that you have written yourself. Anybody can write a poem because everyone has a "you." "You" are a poem.

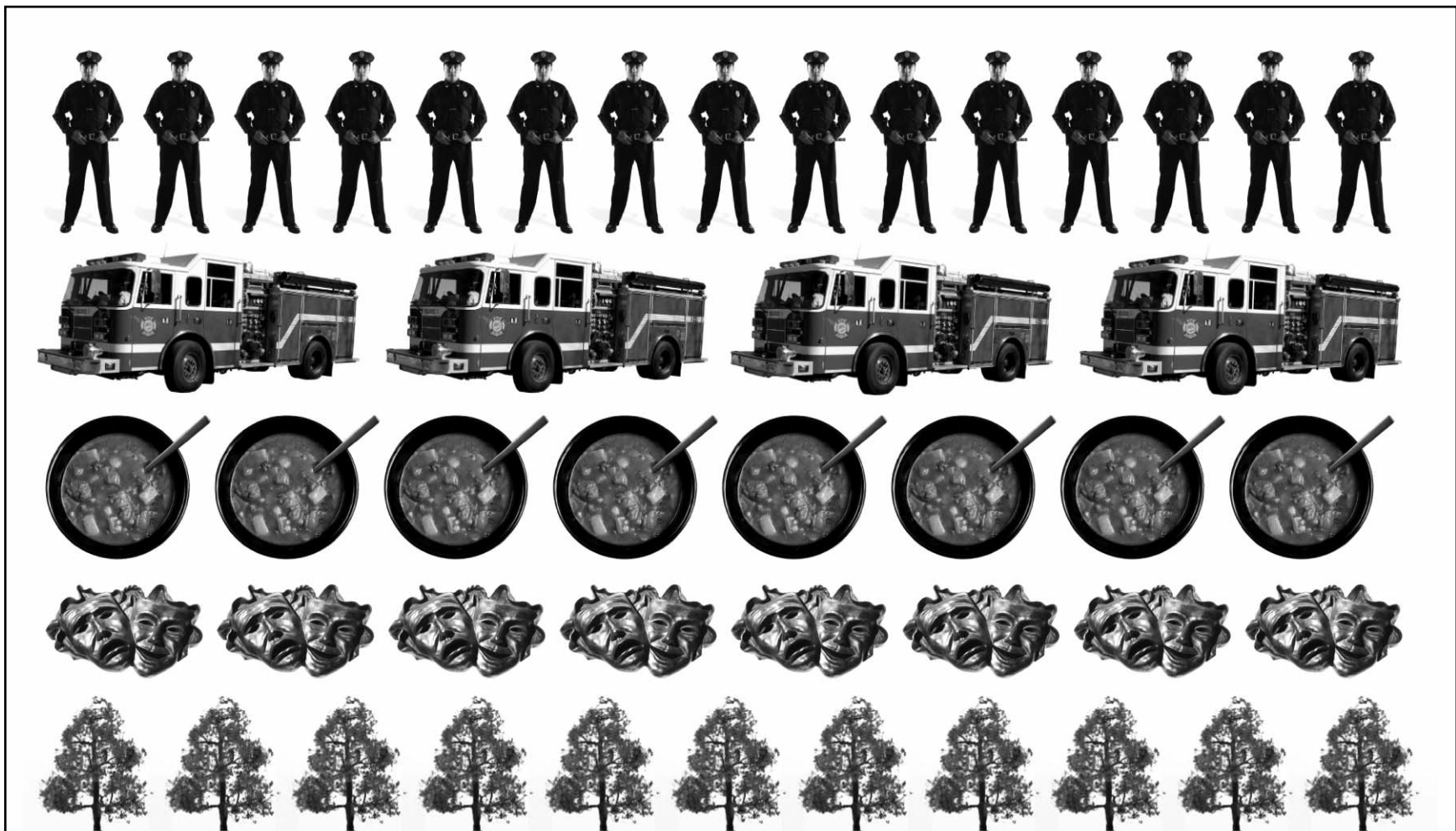
Have a beer. Express yourself by doing something other than shooting people. Let people know what you really think. Be a human being instead of a loser. Express yourself.

The 21 Club has been described as GROUND ZERO by the reputable respectable newspapers in this country that report on the carnage that occurs outside that I personally have observed for eight years, and by now find normal.

But I see pure beauty here, and this beauty can only be reported through the vehicle of poetry.

Plus, Frank, the bartender who owns the 21 Club, wants to open up his bar for you to read your poems.

It doesn't get any better than that. ■



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# Health education unit spearheads

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"Actually, there's no better role for city government than to protect people," countered Steven Fugaro, former president of the S.F. Medical Society. "Data show that 50% of people in the United States show evidence of exposure to secondhand smoke."

And, according to UCSF Professor Stanton Glantz, among the nation's leading experts on tobacco's effects, who spoke later in the hearing, no level of secondhand smoke is safe and it's no respecter of barriers.

"It can diffuse throughout a building, through pipes and heating vents, out windows and up into other windows," he said. Worse, its effects — damage to the cells that line blood vessels, for example — are still obvious 24 hours after exposure. The EPA has classified secondhand smoke as a known cause of cancer in humans, he added.

Ordinance 80438 is in a holding pattern. Except for a provision to ban smoking in taxis that was passed separately in December, all the other provisions were put on hold at Daly's request.

"The supervisor was approached last year and agreed to carry the ordinance," says his aide Tom Jackson. "He won't move it forward to the Rules Committee until he's sure it has the support to pass it."

## 'NOT A CIVIL LIBERTY'

The facts about smoking's dangers are undeniable, yet tobacco control remains controversial because it pits nonsmokers' safety against smokers' rights.

products and must renew the license annually for a fee of \$188.

Last year's most newsworthy ban — the first for a major U.S. city — prohibits all 60 stand-alone drugstores in San Francisco from selling cigarettes, cigars, snuff and other tobacco products. Pharmacies located inside of grocery stores and big box stores are exempt.

Coalition members — currently there are 16 — also have implemented dozens of anti-tobacco activities targeted to their neighborhoods and constituents, and coordinated broader actions to expose the tobacco companies' scientific cover-ups and counteract international marketing strategies.

Mission Housing Development Corp. got the Board of Education to ban the sale of food produced by tobacco subsidiaries at public schools. In response to advocacy from the Girls After School Academy, a Sunnydale housing complex began designating certain apartments as smoke-free. The local chapter of the American Lung Association successfully advocated for smoke-free housing at three multiunit complexes. Project RIDE, which encourages car-loving youth to become social advocates, convinced Asian American-sponsored events to reject tobacco sponsorship. And Latino Issues Forum got S.F. State University and City College to divest their tobacco stocks and stop selling cigarettes on campus.

Members of the Tobacco Free Coalition are an eclectic lot. Some, like the local branch of the American Cancer Society, are large, venerable organizations with broad mandates that fold coalition advocacy work into their day-to-day activities. Others are small projects and programs, such as the Sunset Russian Tobacco Education Project, which runs Russian language stop-smoking clinics at a neighborhood health center.

## COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

Coalition members meet quarterly to strategize and confer with staff of the Tobacco Free Project, a health education component of San Francisco's Public Health Department. The project and the coalition were launched in 1990, two years after California voters approved Proposition 99, the Tobacco Tax and Health Promotion Act that raised the tax from 10¢ to 35¢ per tobacco item or pack. Prop. 99 mandated that coalitions be formed to ensure that local government spending of the tax revenue reflects the community's diversity.

Of the tax hike, 5¢ is dedicated to tobacco-prevention activities. The rest goes to tobacco, drug and alcohol prevention in schools; research into tobacco-related diseases; medical services; and mitigation of smoking-related environmental damage, such as fires and litter.

The nickel is stashed in a state Health Education Account — last year, the state collected \$55.6 million — and then is distributed to "local lead agencies," usually public health departments that steer their county's tobacco control efforts. The Tobacco Free Project is the DPH program for San Francisco. For fiscal 2008-09, the project's Prop. 99 revenues were \$551,386.

Financial support for the Tobacco Free Project and similar prevention efforts nationwide got another boost in 1998 when five big tobacco companies signed a Master Settlement Agreement — a slap across the face of the tobacco industry by state attorneys general for covering up smoking's addictiveness and health consequences and for promoting its allure to youth. Of the \$206 billion the companies agreed to pay all 50 states over 25 years, California gets \$25 billion. Funding began in 2000. That year, the Tobacco Free Project started receiving about \$1 million annually to supplement its Prop. 99 revenues.

Much of Tobacco Free Project's budget gets regranted through competitive grants to community organizations, many of them coalition members, to fund their services: educating the public about the dangers of smoking, offering quit-smoking classes, advocating to reduce secondhand smoke, struggling to make tobacco less accessible and appealing to youth, and networking with state, national and international organizations to counter pro-tobacco influences. Some coalition members also get



Members of Youth Leadership Institute's TURF — to plan strategies for their upcoming campaign to l

competitive, multiyear grants directly from the state Department of Public Health's Tobacco Control Program.

Together, funded projects have operated in 12 city neighborhoods — Bayview, Chinatown, Excelsior, Hayes Valley, Ingleside, Mission, Potrero Hill, Richmond, South of Market, Sunnydale, Sunset and Tenderloin.

"Project staff do a lot of the research to help guide the coalition," says Alyonik Hrushow, Tobacco Free Project director since its inception, "but we have no vote on policy decisions. We're there to draft position papers and prepare fact sheets, and we put on trainings for members, and provide technical assistance and research. The coalition members themselves are entirely independent of the Public Health Department."

In 1994, the project developed a Community Action Model to help grantees mobilize their constituents, not so much to change individuals but to improve the environmental health of entire neighborhoods or communities. Since then, it has funded 53 organizations to use the model, which is based on successful community organizing theories from around the world.

## ACTION MODEL — IN ACTION

The Community Action Model works, says Alex Tom, co-director of Chinese Progressive Association, a coalition member since the early 1990s. "Last year we used the model for our work on secondhand smoke in Chinatown SROs. We held meetings, recruited a core of six adult and youth advocates, named a peer organizer, and practiced how to make effective presentations to our community."

The advocates began by surveying the tenants of 20 buildings about how other people's smoking affected them.

"These are very cramped spaces in Chinatown buildings," Tom says. "There may be a smoker in the family, and other family members can't get away from the smoke. Bathrooms are shared, and we heard many stories of people just sitting in there smoking. We're worried about the most vulnerable in the community, the children and the old people."

The survey results confirmed that most tenants worried about the effects of secondhand smoke and many felt it affected their health. "That's when we decided to move our advocacy efforts to the citywide secondhand smoke ordinance," Tom adds.

Not all tobacco control efforts are successful, and Chinese Progressive Association has experienced firsthand the disappointment of work that eventually comes to naught. Its first Tobacco Free-funded project, called Chinese Power Against Tobacco, was a fight against billboards that it felt promoted smoking's attractiveness to youth in Chinatown. In 1995, the group broadened its scope and worked with then-Supervisor Angela Alioto to sponsor



**Youth advocate**  
from Tobacco Free Project grantees Thad Brown Boys Academy urges passage of an ordinance banning smoking at transit stops. The ordinance, authored by then-Supervisor Fiona Ma, left, passed in 2006.

Karen Licavoli, a vice president of Breathe California, which works to mitigate the effects of lung disease, came down hard on the side of protection at the hearing.

"Smoking is not a civil liberty," she said.

Breathe California is a member of the city's Tobacco Free Coalition, a group of organizations that, since 1990, has spearheaded 17 public policy changes to control tobacco use in San Francisco (see sidebar). The proposed secondhand smoke ordinance is the most sweeping.

Lighting up is now prohibited in playgrounds, city parks and gardens, at bus stops and golf courses. No one can use any tobacco product at a Rec and Park athletic field, and tobacco companies are banned from sponsoring youth sports leagues. Tobacco products can't be given away, and they can't be sold in vending machines or displayed on self-service racks or shelves and where minors are permitted. Businesses need a permit to sell tobacco

# ...ds city's tobacco-free movement



PHOTO BY FAHAD QURASHI

Tobacco Use Reduction Force — meet in February to limit retailers selling tobacco in the city.

an ordinance banning outdoor tobacco advertising citywide. It passed but was shot down a few years later when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that state and local governments couldn't regulate tobacco advertising.

Chinese Progressive Association had better luck with a school district policy to ban students from wearing or carrying anything in school that promotes tobacco. Joe Camel and other tobacco icons were favorites with young people, especially on T-shirts, backpacks and hats that were available cheap or free with coupons. When the Chinese Progressive Association surveyed 1,000 middle and high school students, it found that 22% owned items with promotional advertising. Leland Yee, then a school board member, introduced the policy in 1996 and it was enacted three years later.

Chinese Progressive Association had another big win in 1999 when it was the lead coalition member in the fight to make sure San Francisco got Master Settlement Agreement money for tobacco control.

"There were no strings attached to the Master Settlement Agreement funds," Hrushow explains. "States, cities, counties weren't required to spend the funds on any particular purpose. The coalition advocated for the funds to be allocated to tobacco control in the city, and the city got two allocations — one from a lawsuit that the city filed and the other when the city joined in a state suit."

Chinese Progressive Association members led other Tobacco Free advocates as they spoke at press conferences, testified at hearings and advocated with supervisors to allocate Master Settlement funds for tobacco control. They asked for \$2.5 million a year but in the end got \$1 million.

"Still, looking back over the years, I think the coalition's greatest, most important success was getting that \$1 million" for the resources it brought to the movement's efforts, Hrushow says.

## FIGHTING A GOLIATH

After last July's secondhand smoke hearing, coalition members Carol McGruder and Julie Waters, of Communities Under Siege, which fights Big Tobacco here and abroad, congratulated Hrushow and staff Mele Lau and Susana Hennessey Lavery: "[We are] 100% sure that our coalition members join with us in saluting you for the infrastructure support that you provide. You are truly 'the glue' that keeps us all together," they wrote.

Hrushow is proud of Tobacco Free Coalition's accomplishments and blunt about its adversaries: "The source of the tobacco epidemic is the tobacco companies. Their product kills. Phillip Morris saw the tobacco control policy work as its biggest challenge and tried to stop us in our tracks. They harassed us at the local level and tried to discredit our work."

According to a chronology of California tobacco politics posted by Glantz on the UCSF digital archives, the tobacco industry spent \$21

million to defeat Prop. 99 and, when the initiative passed in 1988, filed two unsuccessful lawsuits claiming it was unconstitutional. Over the next few years, the industry spent many millions more on lobbying and campaign contributions to mitigate the initiative's effects and eventually got to Gov. Pete Wilson and other elected officials. The result: Up to a third of tobacco health education revenues were diverted to perinatal services for several years.

Legal challenges on both sides further delayed resolution of the fund diversions. The loss of money had health consequences. A chart from the state Department of Health Services shows that the year after funds were slashed from \$140 million to \$60 million, teen smoking jumped from 9% to 11% statewide. In San Francisco, teen smoking rose from 16% in 1991 to 20% in 1995.

Young people here, however, responded to Tobacco Free's anti-smoking education, its efforts to control advertising and its insistence that tobacco sales to youth be monitored more carefully. By 2007, teen smoking in San Francisco had dropped to 8%, down 58% from its high, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Nationwide, however, youth are still smoking at alarming rates — almost 20% in 2007, according to the CDC, and 80% of new smokers are under 18. The industry has been careful to avoid advertising directly to minors, and it doesn't have to: Teens look up to their older peers and want to imitate them, so Big Tobacco goes after legal prey, the 18- to 25-year-olds.

Exposing the tobacco companies' targeting of young adults won McGruder a 2009 Jefferson Award for exceptional public service. Two years ago, she went undercover to nightclubs and tobacco company-sponsored parties where Camel No. 9, a new cigarette fashionably packaged in hot pink and cool teal, was handed out to the young women, along with free manicures, makeup, hairstyling.

"Everything about it was geared to it being sexy and exciting, to get young people hooked," McGruder told CBS Channel 5 news after winning the award.

One provision of the 1998 tobacco Master Settlement Agreement prohibited cigarette giveaways except in adult settings, "It stopped (the tobacco companies) from giving out samples on Market Street, for example, but let them keep the clubs," McGruder explained to The Extra. "San Francisco was the only Bay Area city that hadn't restricted them from doing this and, frankly, most of us were surprised it was still going on."

McGruder's sleuthing prompted her and her colleagues to push through a December 2008 ban on free cigarette giveaways in the city's bars and nightclubs.

## MARSHALING YOUTHS

Another organization trying to stop Big Tobacco's targeting of young people is coalition member Youth Leadership Institute. Founded in 1989, now with programs in San Francisco, Marin, San Mateo and Fresno counties, the institute trains high school and college youth to advocate for social change that affects them directly, including controlling tobacco.

The San Francisco institute's primary tobacco control project is TURF — Tobacco Use Reduction Force — which has an ambitious goal: to cut the number of San Francisco youth and adults who smoke by limiting retailers that sell tobacco. TURF's research shows that the tobacco industry targets young people, especially of color, in low-income neighborhoods, and that where there are more tobacco retailers, more people smoke.

"TURF sees tobacco as a social justice issue — the tobacco companies are manipulating you, taking advantage of you," says Matt Rosen, senior director of youth leadership. Young people can effect change, but that's not an easy sell, he says. "Tobacco, like alcohol and drugs, is not the sexiest issue for youth here in San Francisco. It's hard to get young people in the door, and victories are important to them."

Young advocates who do buy into the message that they are being manipulated have another formidable hurdle — convincing their peers, a population that thinks it is invincible,

of the dangers of tobacco.

Rosen praises the efforts of TURF Coordinator Fahad Qurashi to recruit youth and keep them involved. He leads eight TURF advocates, who spend about five hours a week doing research and community mapping, learning leadership skills and planning actions. Qurashi, himself a youth advocate when he was in college, also is Tobacco Free Coalition's co-chair.

"Some of these kids are new to the game, but others were part of past campaigns," Qurashi said.

Three, in fact, weathered the disappointment of a campaign that fizzled. Beginning in 2005, the young advocates worked for two years on a tobacco manufacturer's mitigation fee.

"The basic idea," Qurashi said, "was to have the city charge a fee for the harms the

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## Tobacco-free highlights

- SINCE it formed in 1990, the Tobacco Free Coalition has encouraged and helped enact these policies and laws regulating tobacco use, sale and presence in San Francisco:
- Banned tobacco advertising (products and company names) on city-owned property (1992)
  - Banned smoking in enclosed workplaces, restaurants, public places and sports stadiums (1994)
  - Banned self-service displays of tobacco products (1996)
  - Banned cigarette vending machines (1997)
  - Divested city Employees' Retirement System of tobacco stocks (1998)
  - Rec and Park Commission banned smoking on city playgrounds (1998)
  - Banned tobacco advertising on taxicabs (1999)
  - Board of Education banned wearing or carrying tobacco promotional items (1999)
  - Retailers must obtain a city permit to sell tobacco products (2003)
  - Banned smoking in unenclosed city parks, squares, gardens (2005)
  - Rec and Park Commission banned tobacco company sponsorship of youth sport leagues (2005)
  - Banned smoking at public golf courses (2006)
  - Banned smoking at public transit stops and shelters (2006)
  - Banned tobacco sales on all city property, except the airport (2008)
  - Banned distribution of free tobacco and tobacco accessories in places open to the public, including bars and nightclubs (2008)
  - Banned smoking in taxis (2008)
  - Banned tobacco sales in pharmacies (2008) ■



**Boris**, a smoker for 48 years who survived four heart attacks, gets acupuncture to help him quit at the Sunset Russian Tobacco Education Project, a Tobacco Free Project grantee.

# Tobacco Free: Model of community organizing

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tobacco companies cause — pollution, health hazards, fires.”

The group helped write policy language for the ordinance and got Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi to sponsor it, but, because of potential legal challenges, it was never introduced.

The young people took it well, Qurashi said. “It was a good learning lesson regarding public policy and politics in San Francisco. They were proud about educating the community on the issue, building their professional skills and working on a social justice issue.”

## LGBT COMMUNITY TARGETED

Another Tobacco Free Project grantee is The Last Drag, a program of CLASH (Coalition of Lavender-Americans on Smoking & Health). The Last Drag offers the LGBT community free, seven-session smoking-cessation classes four times a year.

LGBT Tobacco Education Partnership project Director Bob Gordon calls tobacco control work “a huge challenge” in the gay community, which, he says, is thought to have more deaths related to tobacco than to AIDS, suicide and auto accidents combined.

One mid-1990s study in California found that people in the LGBT community smoke much more than the general population, with LGBT women smoking three times more than all women. Gordon says the tobacco industry has been persistently targeting gays since the early 1990s, through giveaways and advertising — he has drawn

from tobacco companies.

“There are at least 50 of these officials statewide,” Gordon said. “As of June, 36 had signed. We think that’s a great response.”

Gordon insists that despite all his tobacco control work, he’s not for prohibiting smoking when it doesn’t affect the health of others. “We need empathy for people who are struggling to stop smoking,” he said. “But I do want the tobacco companies regulated and prohibited from false advertising. The real problem is people starting to smoke and getting addicted — which only takes about 100 cigarettes.”

## PRICE HELPS CONTROL SMOKING

Late in the 1980s, when tobacco companies were just starting to feel the pinch of government control, cigarettes cost around \$1.50 a pack. In San Francisco, now expect to pay \$6 to \$7 a pack, the result of inflation and state and federal taxes.

Price helps control smoking. The National Center for Biotechnology Information, which tracks human health and disease, found that in the first decade after Prop. 99 passed, the incidence of lung cancer in the San Francisco-Oakland area dropped 6%; statewide, that translated to 11,000 fewer cases of the deadly disease.

After President Obama signed a law raising the federal tax on cigarettes from 39¢ to \$1.01 in February, the California Department of Public Health’s Tobacco Control Program estimated that 172,000 youth in the state wouldn’t start smoking because of the hike and 118,000 adult smokers would quit.

Until the end of the century and the Master Settlement Agreement, tobacco taxes funded the lion’s share of anti-smoking efforts nationwide. Prop. 99’s 25¢ tax increase made California the state with the highest tobacco tax, but it since has slipped to No. 30. In June, the state was poised to raise the tax to \$1.50 a pack, though the bill was mired in the annual budget fracas. If approved, California would move back up the list to No. 5.

Among the states, only Utah has a lower smoking rate than California. Adult smoking in San Francisco dropped from 20% in 1996 to 14% in 2005, the most recent statistics available, according to a state Department of Health Services tobacco survey. That’s the good news.

But success has made California a ripe target for tobacco industry promotions, and that’s the bad news. The Tobacco Free Project’s recent 10-year report says that in 2003, tobacco companies spent 20 times more promoting its products in the state than the state spent on tobacco control — \$70 million vs. \$3.4 million.

Added to this is the irony that fewer people smoking reduces the revenue for tobacco control. The city’s Prop. 99 allocation has dropped steadily — from \$1.6 million in 1989-90 down to \$551,386 for fiscal 2008-09. The decrease was initially caused by funds being diverted; now it’s because people are smoking less, Hrushow says. “We did have our [Prop. 99] funding restored in 1998-99. In the meantime, as smoking rates decline, the tobacco tax money has declined, too.”

The tax and settlement revenues have allowed the Tobacco Free Project and the coalition to achieve stunning successes, but while San Francisco has a reputation for leading trends, it’s behind the curve when it comes to regulating secondhand smoke.

Berkeley made all its public transportation smoke-free in 1948, 12 years after Milwaukee, which was first in 1936. Berkeley also became the first California city to limit smoking in public buildings, while San Luis Obispo was the first city in the world to completely ban smoking in public buildings, in 1990. The City Council of Belmont in March prohibited smoking everywhere in the city except detached single-family homes.

Oakland’s retail tobacco licensing fee of \$1,500 is the nation’s highest. It’s also the only California city that requires landlords and condo sellers to tell prospective residents where they can and can’t smoke in buildings.

For its efforts, Oakland was the highest-scoring Bay Area city in the American Lung Association’s 2008 report card, a nationwide tally of how well municipalities are doing with anti-tobacco laws. Oakland got a B.

“San Francisco got a C, but that was up from an F the year before,” says Hrushow. “We’re definitely behind on regulating secondhand smoke in outdoor areas and in housing, but we are a leader in controlling the availability of tobacco products, and in opposing tobacco sponsorship.”

## WIN SOME, LOSE SOME

Some tobacco battles are more easily won than others. The ordinance requiring tobacco sellers to get a permit took five years to enact. Coalition members have been working since early 2007 on the secondhand smoke legislation.

“We’ve had 24 slightly altered versions of the legislation that’s now pending with the supervisors,” Hrushow says. “They were working documents, adjusted just a little.”

She expresses frustration with the secondhand smoke ordinance, whose provisions, complex and wide-ranging, are demanding patience among advocates. “It is a challenge,” she says.

In the give and take of legislating, compromises are essential, and the coalition has agreed to amend several provisions: In response to concerns from the Golden Gate Restaurant Association, it has changed the provision that bans smoking within 20 feet of private, nonresidential building entrances, exits and operable windows to allowing smoking only at the curb outside those buildings, and, if there’s no curb — think plazas, ports, alleys — 15 feet from the entries.

In response to the Small Business Commission, the coalition also agreed that smoking will be allowed in tobacco shops and owner-operated bars that opened before the ordinance is adopted. The grandfathering in, however, applies only to bars and tobacco shops that aren’t in mixed-use residential and commercial buildings.

And in response to tenant rights advocates who worry that making it illegal to smoke in common areas of multiunit residences might give landlords an easy excuse to evict unwanted renters, the coalition added the language, “Violation of any part of the article is not a cause for eviction.”

The groundwork for the ban on selling tobacco products in pharmacies also took years to develop, but it was more focused. And once laid on the legislative table, it flew through in four months.

Introduced by Mayor Newsom in April 2008 and carried by then-Supervisor Aaron Peskin, the drugstore ban was heard at the Health Commission and the City Operations Committee meeting in July, passed by the full board Aug. 5 and signed into law Aug. 8. Walgreens cried foul to the ordinance and filed suit to stop it, claiming the ordinance favored pharmacies in groceries and big box stores, which are exempt, then a Superior Court judge dismissed the suit in December. Walgreens is appealing.

The pharmacy ordinance had heavy support that helped it move through so quickly, said Gordon. “It’s what’s ‘in’ socially, the UCSF School of Pharmacy had been urging it for years, plus it had the mayor behind it. It was a major coup for the mayor — governing the first city that disallows selling cigarettes in pharmacies.”

## MORE WORK TO DO

The tobacco struggles are far from over. Many are hailing Congress’ June passage of SB 892, giving the FDA broad control over tobacco manufacturing, marketing and distribution, as a major nail in the industry’s coffin. AP reported that Sen. Ted Kennedy called it “a lifesaving act for the millions of

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PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CHINESE PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION

**Youth in Chinese**  
Progressive Association’s CPAT program (Chinese Power Against Tobacco) meet and work on community organizing issues.

ers full of sample magazines, and on his computer he’s bookmarked trinketsandtrash.org, a Website that archives thousands of images of tobacco industry marketing materials for all populations, including LGBT.

Gordon, formerly a staff member of the Tobacco Free Project, had a background in advertising that gives him insight on getting people to buy a product or a message. “The psychology of it comes down to finding common ground for what you’re selling and the [audience’s] self-interest. With gays, I’ve learned that you can’t just say ‘don’t smoke’ — we’ve been told so many ‘no’s’ over the years, as advocates we have to work from a positive angle, with a concise, simple, single message. Our job is to make science and health easy to understand.”

Last year, to advocate for the ordinance that bans cigarette sales in pharmacies, the LGBT Partnership polled people at the Castro Street Fair, where 87% said they’d support the ban; gathered petition signatures; and created a clever bus poster and fact card handout. Above the image of syrup being poured into a spoon, it said, “To help a persistent cough go to aisle 8.” Above a photo of a burning cigarette with a long ash: “To get a persistent cough go to aisle 14.” The final message on a stark black background: “Cigarettes and pharmacies don’t mix.”

This year’s LGBT Partnership campaign started as a statewide effort and has spread to the nation: getting LGBT elected officials to pledge that they won’t take contributions

# Milestones in 45-year movement

CALIFORNIA'S Prop. 99 got the city's Tobacco Free Project and Tobacco Free Coalition off the ground in 1990, but a major tobacco-control "event" 10 years later — the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement — brought long-term support. Its history, greatly compressed here, is a primer in the clash between public health campaigns and as well-financed, entrenched industry trying to protect its products.

The U.S. surgeon general released a report in 1964 that linked smoking and increased death rates, especially from lung cancer. A year later, Congress began requiring a health warning on cigarette packages. Cigarette advertising was banned on radio and television in 1970. By 1972, the surgeon general was proposing a government ban on smoking in public places and a year later identified secondhand smoke as a health risk. Arizona restricted smoking in public places, followed two years later by Minnesota. The military dropped cigarettes from K-rations and C-rations in 1975.

The tobacco industry fought every control effort. It denied connections between smoking and cancer, and insisted that tobacco was not addictive.

In a 1978 congressional hearing, Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden asked seven tobacco company reps lined up at a long table, "Do you believe nicotine is not addictive?" In turn, each of the seven leaned into the microphone and said, "I believe nicotine is not addictive" — a little bit of theater that now can be viewed on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txYH8RCCQk&url=http://www.mahalo.com>).

During the 1980s and 1990s, more and more state attorneys general filed lawsuits against tobacco companies. The tobacco industry, insisting that most smokers knew smoking was dangerous before lighting up, managed to parry most legal thrusts.

Mississippi became the first state to successfully sue the tobacco industry on behalf of taxpayers, charging the industry with the medical costs of sick tobacco users who received Medicaid. The 1994 suit was settled three years later: \$3.4 billion to the state for 25 years.

Insiders' leaks put the industry on edge. In 1994, Dr. Stanton Glantz, U.C. at San Francisco, who was already a national champion in the anti-smoking movement, received two boxes in his office. Inside, from "Mr. Butts," were the "Pentagon Papers" of the nation's war on tobacco: 4,000 pages of leaked, internal Brown & Williamson Tobacco Co. documents that described the company's 30 years of marketing and scientific research, including the addictive effects of nicotine. In his book, "The Cigarette Papers," Glantz documented what the company knew and covered up about tobacco, and how it manipulated public information.

Also in 1994 — 30 years after the surgeon general's report that triggered the anti-tobacco movement — a confidential Philip

Morris memo leaked to the Wall Street Journal likened nicotine to cocaine and morphine. It said "the primary reason" people smoke is "to deliver nicotine into their bodies," and conceded that smokers use nicotine to "change psychological states." Scientific proof of addiction poured in. The FDA declared cigarettes "drug delivery devices" in 1995 and imposed marketing restrictions. Cases of industry obfuscation mounted. Lawsuits escalated. Tobacco companies began looking for a way to staunch the financial bleeding.

The result was the 1998 Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement: Top manufacturers Brown & Williamson, Lorillard, Philip Morris, R.J. Reynolds and Commonwealth agreed to a laundry list of restrictions. They were prohibited from targeting youth in their advertising, marketing and promotions, and had to commit to discouraging youth tobacco use. And they had to pay the states \$206 billion over 25 years, with funding beginning in 2000.

In exchange for the largess from the settlement, state attorneys general agreed to drop pending suits and file no future suits. But individual and class-action lawsuits continue. In 2000, a jury in California ordered Philip Morris to pay \$51.5 million to a woman who said her inoperable lung cancer was due to smoking. That year, as many as 125 class-action suits were pending across the country.

In 2006, a new surgeon general report definitively linked secondhand smoke to lung cancer and heart disease in non-smoking adults as well as to sudden infant death syndrome, low birth weight, acute respiratory infections, ear infections and asthma attacks in infants and children. The report spurred a flurry of legislative action especially by local governments.

On June 11, the Senate passed SB 982, a bill Sen. Ted Kennedy sponsored that gives the FDA primary authority over tobacco's manufacture, marketing and distribution. Listing of ingredients on product packages, regulation of tar and nicotine levels, a mandate to disclose all research findings, a ban on using "light" and "mild," and other restrictions on tobacco advertising are some of its provisions, which will be phased in over the next two years. Graphic warning labels must be on products by July 11, but candy-flavored cigarettes will have to be off the shelves by October of this year.

Tobacco companies won't give in easily: Even as the Senate was passing SB 982, R.J. Reynolds was beginning to test-market dissolvable, high-nicotine options to cigarettes for places where you can't light up and that might be especially appealing to young people: lozenge-shaped Camel Orbs, toothpick-size Camel Sticks and filmstrip-like Camel Strips. An amendment added to SB 982 bans this "tobacco candy." ■

—MARJORIE BEGGS



## Secondhand smoke law may be gaining support

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children who will be spared a lifetime of addiction and premature death."

Others feel that the slow, steady, persistent efforts of advocates have already changed how most people feel about smoking. In a May 13 interview on NPR's "Fresh Air," former FDA Commissioner and dean of Yale and UC San Francisco medical schools David Kessler called tobacco control one of "the great public health successes." Kessler's topic that day was the detrimental effects of excess sugar, fat and salt, and government's role in regulating them to improve especially children's health.

"If you look at tobacco, if you look at seat belts, how did we win those battles?" Kessler asked, rhetorically. His answer was "government control. In the end, we've changed the way we look at tobacco. And if I get in a car, I don't feel normal unless I put on that seat belt."

Smoking as "abnormal"?

If you're a San Franciscan of a certain age — say, over 50 — you remember when you could smoke at your desk in your office, have an after-lunch cigarette at your table in your favorite restaurant, light up on a flight from SFO to LAX, puff away at movie theaters, in courtrooms, on buses, in college classrooms, in doctor's offices and hospital rooms.

Smoking was ubiquitous. Those who didn't smoke sometimes complained if the vapor wafted into their face. More likely, they just moved away, if they could, with nary a word.

If you're under 50, you may not believe that.

Tobacco Free's 20 years of work has helped move smoking from acceptable toward "not normal." However, it still has Philip Morris' appeal hanging over it, an artifact of its dismissed lawsuit against the city over banning tobacco in pharmacies. The ban, claimed the suit, "unfairly deprives adult consumers of the opportunity to buy tobacco products from legitimate, licensed retail businesses."

The local work goes on and on. Just two weeks after the FDA bill passed, Hrushow got an email from the American Lung Association. The alert asked local advocates to shoot off letters opposing an executive order by Gov. Schwarzenegger that might ax several Prop 99-funded contracts that are part of the California Tobacco Control Program. Among them is one that funds efforts to increase penalties for retailers who sell to minors and another that gives advocates, health professionals and elected officials access to free legal advice about tobacco control. The Lung Association alert said the Tobacco Control Program has saved more than a million lives and \$86 billion in personal health care costs since its inception in 1988.

And the city's secondhand smoke ordinance? As tobacco topics continue to capture headlines nationwide, Daly aide Tom Jackson says two formerly uncommitted supervisors may be ready to approve the ordinance.

"The supervisor cares about this issue and supports the changes," Jackson says, "but mostly he's giving the coalition advo-

cates the room to move this forward. It's their baby."

Postscript: Efforts to control smoking are nothing new. The world's first smoking ban was a 1590 papal bull by Pope Urban VII — he threatened to excommunicate anyone who chewed, sniffed or smoked tobacco in a pipe inside a church or on a church's "porchway." ■

San Francisco Study Center, publisher of *Central City Extra*, is fiscal sponsor of the Tobacco Free Project and the LGBT Tobacco Education Partnership.

**10 p.m., Sept. 30, 2008:** Cigarette shelves are bare at the 825 Market St. Walgreens two hours before the ban on selling tobacco products in pharmacies takes effect.



PHOTO BY BOB GORDON

# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## SPECIAL EVENTS

**LaborFest2009**, July 2-31 events honoring the 75th anniversary of the San Francisco General Strike and the West Coast maritime workers strike. Most of the 60 events are free: art exhibitions, tours, lectures, parades, films, music. Info: laborfest.net.

**Boeddeker Park design meeting for seniors**, July 21, 2:30 p.m., Marlton Manor, 240 Jones, to gather seniors' ideas for changing the park. Suggestions will go to Trust for Public Land, which is holding a series of meetings to help it plan an \$8 million park renovation. Info: Michael Cooper, 885-0361 ext.103.

**Positively 6th Street Fair**, Sat., Aug. 1, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., Stevenson Alley between 6th and 7th streets. Bands, dance and cultural performances, children's play area, family activities, food, community information tables, free health and social services, job help and more. Info: [positively6thstreetfair.org](http://positively6thstreetfair.org). To volunteer: Meital Amitai, 538-8100, ext. 202 or [mamitai@iibayarea.org](mailto:mamitai@iibayarea.org).

## NEW ART EVENTS

**"Art and Labor Today" exhibition**, July 9-25, SoMarts Cultural Center, 934 Brannan, curated by David Duckworth as part of LaborFest. Free. Info: <http://blog.somarts.org>.

**"The Ballad of Polly Ann,"** dance performance by Jo Kreiter's Flyaway Productions, July 14-18, and July 21-25, 8 p.m., SOMArts Cultural Center, 934 Brannan. As part of LaborFest, the premiere celebrates the women who built Bay Area bridges. Tickets: \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door. Info: [flyawayproductions.com](http://flyawayproductions.com) and <http://blog.somarts.org>.

**Thursday Night Combo hosted by Mark Romyn**, July 16, 8:30 p.m. EXIT Café, 156 Eddy. Variety show with excerpts of plays, songs, magic, and other works-in-progress by Bay Area theater artists. \$5 donation requested. Info: [sffringe.org](http://sffringe.org).

**"Lady of the Loin,"** chanteuse Shannon Day with songwriting team Don Seaver and Sean Owens, July 25 and Aug. 1, 8 and 15, 9 p.m., EXIT Theatre, 156 Eddy. Day sings about "good girls gone wrong, wronged girls getting the goods, and lowlives living the high life." Tickets: \$15. Reservations 673-3847. Info: [sffringe.org](http://sffringe.org).

**Sixth Annual SF Theater Festival**, Sun., July 26, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Yerba Buena Gardens and Contemporary Jewish Museum. Free showcase for Bay Area theater groups and performers features 227 actors, 130 shows, all less than 30 minutes. Info: 291-8655 and [sftheaterfestival.org](http://sftheaterfestival.org).

**The Upper Crust, docent tours**, first Tuesday of the month, through November, noon-1 p.m., across from City Hall. The plaza's sycamores, in full leaf, are growing up through Patrick Dougherty's large-scale environmental work, 4,500 pounds of willow saplings woven into the trees. Info: 252-4638 and [startcommission.org/pubartcollection](http://startcommission.org/pubartcollection).

## COMMUNITY: REGULAR SCHEDULE HOUSING

**Supportive Housing Network**, 3rd Thursday of the month, 3-5 p.m., location TBA. Contact: Kendra Fuller, 421-2926 x304.

**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.

## HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

**CBHS Consumer Council**, 3rd Monday of the month, 5-7 p.m., CBHS, 1380 Howard, room 537. Call: 255-3695. Advisory group of consumers from self-help organizations and other mental health consumer advocates. Open to the public.

**Health & Wellness Action Advocates**, 1st Tuesday of the month, 5-7 p.m., Mental Health Assoc., 870 Market, Suite 928. 421-2926 x306.

**Healthcare Action Team**, 2nd Wednesday of the month, Quaker Center, 65 Ninth St., noon-1:30 p.m. 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**, Mental Health Association, 870 Market, Suite 928. Call for dates and times: 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 Ill-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 the public.

## SAFETY

**Safety for Women in the Tenderloin**, every 3rd Wednesday, Central City SRO Collaborative, 449 Turk 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: Alexandra Goldman, volunteer campaign coordinator, 775-7110 x102.

**Neighborhood Emergency Response Team Training (NERT)**. Central city residents can take the S.F. Fire Department's free disaster preparedness and response training at any neighborhood location. See Website for schedule and training locations, [www.sfgov.org/sffdnert](http://www.sfgov.org/sffdnert), or call Lt. Arteseros, 970-2022.

**SoMa Police Community Relations Forum**, 4th Monday of the month, 6-7:30 p.m. Location varies. To receive monthly e-mail info: Meital Amitai, 538-8100 x202 or [mamitai@iisf.org](mailto:mamitai@iisf.org).

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

## NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT

**Alliance for a Better District 6**, 2nd Tuesday of the month, 6 p.m., 230 Eddy. Contact Michael Nulty, 820-1560 or [sf\\_district6@yahoo.com](mailto:sf_district6@yahoo.com), a districtwide improvement association.

**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, 931-1126.

**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](mailto:centralcitydemocrats@yahoo.com).

**Central Market Community Benefit District**, board meets 2nd Tuesday of the month, 989 Market St., 3rd Fl., 3 p.m. Information: 882-3088, <http://central-market.org>.

**Friends of Boeddeker Park**, 2nd Thursday of the month, 3:30 p.m., Boeddeker Rec Center, 240 Eddy. Plan park events, activities and improvements. Contact Betty Traynor, 931-1126.

**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.

**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**. Call District Manager Elaine Zamora for times and dates, 292-4812.

**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](mailto:jim.meko@comcast.net).

**South of Market Project Area Committee**, 3rd Monday of the month, 6 p.m., 1035 Folsom, between 6th & 7th sts. 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](http://www.sompac.com).

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

## SENIORS AND DISABLED

**Mayor's Disability Council**, 3rd Friday of the month, 1-3 p.m., City Hall, room 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](http://www.senioractionnetwork.org).

# Tenderloin nonprofits brace for city's Mega RFP

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end," says Debbie Lerman, administrator of San Francisco Human Services Network, an association of health and human service nonprofits. "We know there will be cuts, we know there will be changes in who delivers the services." But in any event, she says, the net result will be a loss. "The system is not likely to be as strong as it is today." Some insiders speculate that Behavioral Health could lose as much as a third of its programs after the shakeout is complete.

Adding to the uncertainty is confusion over how much money will be available for services. Under the Mega RFP, says Lerman, "Contractors will apply not necessarily knowing how much money is available for their services."

## CUTS COMING IN SEPTEMBER

In addition to figuring out how to provide their services for less money, contractors will have to factor in the possibility of even deeper cuts in the future. "We hear there may be another mid-year cut as early as September," Bassiri said. "It's a dire situation." The mayor can make such mid-year cuts without approval by the Board of Supervisors, causing speculation that some programs the supes add back in July may be whacked a few months later.

Behavioral Health initially issued the Mega RFP Dec. 1, but it was postponed because it was rife with difficulties, including complicated and confusing guidelines; the fact that no one knew how much money would be available after the budget ax started cutting; and bad timing — it was issued during the stressful holiday season.

In the meantime, the department held 46 meetings with 164 stakeholders to flesh out recommendations for a revamped system of care in the wake

of budget cuts. Stakeholders included representatives from civil service, city staff, community organizations and the Service Employees International Union.

According to a Health Department report on the stakeholder process, the group crafted a series of recommendations aimed at coordinating patient care, data-sharing, addressing cultural and linguistic needs, shoring up community-based organizations and establishing performance measures.

## BLUEPRINT FOR FUTURE OF MENTAL HEALTH

Bassiri says he hopes the recommendations — which were presented to the Health Commission — have been used to craft the revamped RFP, which will essentially be the blueprint for mental health care till the contracts expire — a period ranging from one to 10 years, depending on the type of contract.

Lerman is also concerned that the scope of the RFP means the Health Department will be flooded with applicants, creating a backlog that could hurt service providers financially. "DPH has a past history of taking a long time to certify contracts," she said, noting that the department will be further hampered by staff cuts of its own. If contract certifications are delayed, providers' reimbursement will be late, even as they continue to offer services. "Some may be able to get a line of credit to cover their costs, but then they'll have to pay interest. Others may not be able to get credit at all," she said.

Bassiri is concerned that small community organizations unfamiliar with the RFP process or unable to afford experienced grantwriters may wind up being aced out by agencies with deeper pockets. "They could end up losing their programs even though they're providing good services," he said.

The city's dire economic situation has already

hurt some care providers. Tenderloin Health lost funding for its drop-in center, which closed last month. Hyde Street Community Services is preparing to shutter its Clubhouse, a mental health recovery program on Golden Gate Avenue. Many providers are so wrapped up in attempts to ward off cuts under Newsom's proposed budget that they haven't had time to ponder the unknowables of the looming RFP.

Jackie Jenks, executive director of Central City Hospitality House, says she's simply unable to plan until she learns the particulars of the RFP. "It's really difficult, because we just don't know what to expect," she said.

## HOLES IN THE SAFETY NET

Jenks dodged a bullet last month when funding for her organization's self-help center on Turk Street was unexpectedly restored. Now she's lobbying on behalf of other service providers in the neighborhood. "We're concerned about the social safety net," she said. "We're spending so much energy trying to save [other] programs we know are on the chopping block that it's not productive to future-trip on the RFP."

Cindy Gyori, executive director of Hyde Street Community Services, says she expects new contracts under the RFP will be doled out to providers that offer the most services for the least amount of money. "My strategy is to be able to say I can do it all," she said. "If you're a small contractor and you're not a one-stop shop, you go out of business."

The only thing Gyori says she's certain of is that the RFP — which, based on the first Mega RFP's guidelines, will require 60- to 70-page applications per contract — is going to keep her awfully busy.

"When the Mega RFP comes out, I'm going to disappear for awhile," she says. "It's the most important thing to happen to contractors in quite a while." ■