

Mid-Market merchants rip city's ban on private cars

Hasn't helped
business, they say

BY DANIEL POWELL
AND GEOFF LINK

THE mayor and supervisors recently applied a variety of Band-Aids to Market Street's festering midsection:

- Eastbound cars were restricted from 10th to Sixth streets starting Sept. 29.

- In October, 11 empty storefronts were dressed up with art so they don't look so forlorn.

- Green Pods — Greenery is used to extend a store or restaurant onto the sidewalk to enliven the street scene.

It's all an effort to revitalize the street, Timothy Papandreou, assistant deputy director of the Municipal Transportation Agency, told a group of Market Street merchants last month, to make it "the premier street for San Francisco."

City officials want Market Street to become a European-style boulevard with light, calm vehicular traffic, mostly bicycles, with an outdoor culture geared around cafe and restaurant patio dining, all to happen by 2013 when Market Street is to be repaved from Van Ness to Embarcadero.

"We are creating a body of knowledge as we prepare for the repaving of Market Street," Papandreou said.

So far, at least this much has been learned:

- Green Pods — Market Street Grill (1231 Market St.) was first and is still the only Green Pod venue, though "an art school and an art-oriented store" are planning to go Green Pod, the merchants meeting was told by Astrid Haryati, the mayor's office greening director.

- Art in Storefronts — The effort is intended to "quickly transform the face of properties to make them available for leasing," Haryati told the meeting. No leases were reported by mid-December.

- Traffic Calming — 130 fewer vehicles an hour east of Eighth Street, about half the normal flow; traffic on Mission Street increased 15%; Muni gained 50 seconds from Eighth to Fifth. Before the study, bicycles made up 60% of the traffic, during the study 75%.

Eastbound cars have the discretion to turn off Market at Tenth but must turn at Eighth or Sixth. Three parking officers are stationed at Eighth and one or two at Sixth. After the officers leave, many vehicles violate the ban, the study found.

The effort hasn't been without speed bumps. Jason Hailey, an artist hired by the city to paint a 100-foot-long mural across the front of the old Hollywood Billiards building, was stabbed during a robbery attempt on his paints. And some mid-Market merchants are angry at the city for what they feel is an unasked-for role in an experiment

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

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POST OFFICE UPDATES

Federal
Building, SRO
mailbox suit

PAGE 2

FOOD AND LOATHING IN THE TL

My Take,
new column
premieres

PAGE 10



PLANS IN FOR PARK MAKEOVER

\$3 million
redesign set
for 2011

PAGE 10



Beautiful, healthy produce makes up half the food distributed at city pantries.

CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

HOW THE OTHER 7% LIVE



PHOTOS BY MARJORIE BEGGS

The food line at Tenderloin Self Help Center's weekly pantry stretches for half a block up Turk Street to Leavenworth.

TWO BAGS FULL

Food Bank pantries
each week feed
22,000 households

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

On a chilly morning in mid-November, Maria Cecilia Bautista was first in line for the food pantry at Bessie Carmichael School. Behind her were 60 other parents eager for the weekly giveaway to begin.

"I have two children, so this really

helps," she said. "It's very important to my family."

When Anna Colindres, the school's volunteer pantry coordinator, signaled the opening of the pantry at 8:30 a.m., Bautista began moving along the tables, smiling as she filled two shopping bags with the bounty: green apples, celery, small red yams, onions, white potatoes, canned peas and green beans, chicken broth, bottles of fruit juice, chicken gravy mix. And there were special treats because of the coming holiday: a frozen whole chicken — any meat is a rarity at the pantry — and a few chocolate truffles. With care, she could make the food last for a couple of meals, she said.

Bautista has been coming to this South of Market pantry for two years, though she has a job and so does her husband, making their family part of alarming nationwide statistics. The USDA — which has renamed hunger "food insecurity" — says that in 2008, 49 million people, 17 million of them children, didn't have enough to eat, and today's still-sour economy will make 2009's tallies even worse.

"Food banks tend to be the canaries in the coal mine of the national economy," said JC Dwyer, with the Texas Food Bank, interviewed for a recent PBS "NewsHour" segment on hunger in America. "It's absolutely tied to the recession. Food banks" — there are 200 nationwide — "are seeing a 30% increase [in requests]."

By 9:15 a.m., the food was gone. Colindres said lines topped out at 50 people last year. She's not surprised that the number keeps rising.

Bessie Carmichael is one of the San Francisco Food Bank's 200 food pantries,

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

GOOD NEWS for...

B-I-N-G-O After a three-year hiatus, Senior Bingo is back every Tuesday and Thursday, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Boeddeker Clubhouse, 240 Eddy St. Besides good fun and socializing, there are prizes and refreshments. "Everyone over 55 is welcome," says Recreation Director Melvina Hill. "We usually



PHOTO BY TOM CARTER

Sharon Ray fills out her winning bingo card.

do four or five games — regular, T-shape and four corners." The clubhouse is looking for prize donations. Favorites, Hill says, are scented lotions, calendars, teas, toothpaste, costume jewelry, chocolates, men's and women's handkerchiefs and plants. Donation drop-offs are fine, Mon.-Fri., 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m. For more information, contact Hill, 424-7577 or octo04@sbcglobal.net.

THE CENTRAL YMCA has ended its search for a temporary home and will open its doors at 387 Golden Gate Ave. in January, resuming activities for youth, seniors and adults that ended in 2008 after it sold its building a block away to TNDC. The YMCA signed a five-year lease with UC Hastings Law School to occupy 5,500 square feet on the ground floor in the school's new five-story parking garage at Larkin and Golden Gate. Hastings students and faculty will have access to the Y, as part of the deal, and the Y will develop the vacant lot it owns next door at 333 Golden Gate Ave. as a multiuse, outdoor sports court. In time, the Y will build a 50,000-square-foot facility there with full fitness activities, including gym and swimming pool. "While we sustain this presence, we're keeping an eye to the future and need con-



PHOTO BY TOM CARTER

Jesus Uriostegui anchors the YMCA sign to the Hastings garage.

tinued support to make the new facility a reality," Y President and CEO Chuck Collins said in a news release. The Y had occupied its former 220 Golden Gate building since it was completed in 1910. It had 103 hotel rooms, an auditorium, gymnasium and pool. TNDC plans to convert it into a medical clinic and housing for the formerly homeless.

If you have some good news, send it to tom@studycenter.org or marjorie@studycenter.org

Federal Building Post Office customers fear it will close

BY TOM CARTER

IF customer loyalty alone could save a post office, then the patrons of the Federal Building post office at 450 Golden Gate Ave. needn't worry about the branch's closure by the cost-cutting U.S. Postal Service. But they are sweating.

The changing dynamics affecting postal service in the Tenderloin over the last 18 months continue, and no one's sure of what will shake out or how permanent solutions will be.

Postal authorities, as they scramble to stem billion-dollar losses nationwide, held a town hall meeting Nov. 16 to get customer feedback on the Federal Building's full service branch. It could be shuttered because of its declining revenues.

About 50 patrons attended the meeting in the Federal Building and several spoke fervently to keep the branch operating, especially law offices, lawyers and others in the building that count on the fact it's in the basement for last-minute mailings. One attorney suggested that his office's six lawyers have been so dependent on the office for so long as part of their rental agreement that closing it might be a breach of their lease with the General Services Administration.

More than half of the audience filled out a three-page Postal Service questionnaire asking how they used the branch and requesting comments.

The response was "overwhelming," said spokesman James T. Wigdel. "The the general consensus is they use it and they want it to stay open and remain as is. But I didn't look at every one."

Branch consolidation is one of many economies the Postal Service is mulling. In June, the Federal Building, McLaren and Bernal Heights offices were on the agency's list of 413 branches nationwide under consideration.

But four months later — and just days after the November meeting — McLaren and Bernal Heights were spared. The new list of 241 branches dropped them but kept the Federal Building under scrutiny.

San Francisco Postmistress Noemi Luna said in a news release that after considering the community feedback on the two branches, their finances and lease agreements, it made sense to keep them open. The feedback came through letters, but Wigdel wouldn't say how many. No town hall meetings were held for those communities.

At the Federal Building meeting, Wigdel directed that the discussion and questions focus only on the Federal Building branch. First he read a news release reporting that the Postal Service lost \$3.8 billion in its 2009 fiscal year ending in October and predicted — as mail volume continues to decline — a \$7.8 billion loss for 2010.

The Federal Building branch receipts were down 28.5% over the last two years, Wigdel said. The building lost some of its employees to the new Federal Building at Mission and Seventh streets in that period. Later, Wigdel would not give any dollar figures or say the last year the branch was profitable, nor would he discuss losses at the other two branches on the list.

"I can't discuss financials," he said.

The Tenderloin depends on the Federal Building branch more than ever since the Civic Center Branch at 101 Hyde St. branch, which has never had retail services, took out its stamp machine and reduced lobby hours two years ago. Neighborhood activists rejoiced last year when the Postal Service said it was responding to community pressure for changes and vowed to renovate 101 Hyde and start full retail services. No timetable was given.

Earlier this year, the upgrade was called off, the post service citing its dire financial condition. The Civic Center branch has rental boxes and a general delivery window open daily except Sunday 10 a.m.

CORRECTIONS

IN the October issue, The Extra misstated the boundaries of the Tenderloin's alcohol Special Use District, which includes 90 Turk St., where Tip Top Grocery is located.

IN the November issue, "Marketing Mid-Market," we erroneously reported that David Addington owns the Market Street building housing Showdogs Restaurant. He does not own that building; he is co-owner of the restaurant. ■

Federal judge trims city's grounds on SRO mailbox suit

THE city's federal lawsuit challenging the U.S. Postal Service suspension of individual mail delivery to SRO residents survived its first challenge Nov. 5 when U.S. District Judge Jeffrey White denied a USPS motion to dismiss.

Judge White did dismiss the city's request for a ruling that would declare its 2006 Residential Hotel Mail Receptacle Ordinance does not interfere with federally regulated postal operations. He also shot down the city's claims against individual defendants — U.S. Postmaster John Potter, a Postal Service vice president, Michael Daley, and S.F. Postmistress Noemi Luna.

White ruled that the city's challenge can go forward on federal right of privacy and constitutional freedom of speech and assembly grounds.

Next up — a court-ordered mediation between the parties, which could conclude by the end of January. ■

—JONATHAN NEWMAN

to 2 p.m.

Adding to neighborhood angst has been the planned demise of the full service Fox Plaza P.O. at 1390 Market. Its building was slated to be supplanted by condominiums, but the down economy has scotched the plans.

At the Federal Building meeting, Wigdel said the day's community input would be weighed along with financial factors; the postmistress would then make a recommendation and higherups would make the decision, possibly in December.

But he assured everyone nothing would change before the holidays — 101 Hyde has a 120-day lease.

The lawyer from the office with five other lawyers seemed certain of his next move if the Federal Building branch closes. His attorneys don't have time go anywhere else, he said.

"We are locked into the postal system here," he said. "I feel we'll approach GSA to back out of our lease. I'm sure we're not the only agency affected this way." ■



NEWS IS A COMMUNITY SERVICE

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For more info on the Safe Haven Campaign or to volunteer, contact: 415-554-3522 x356

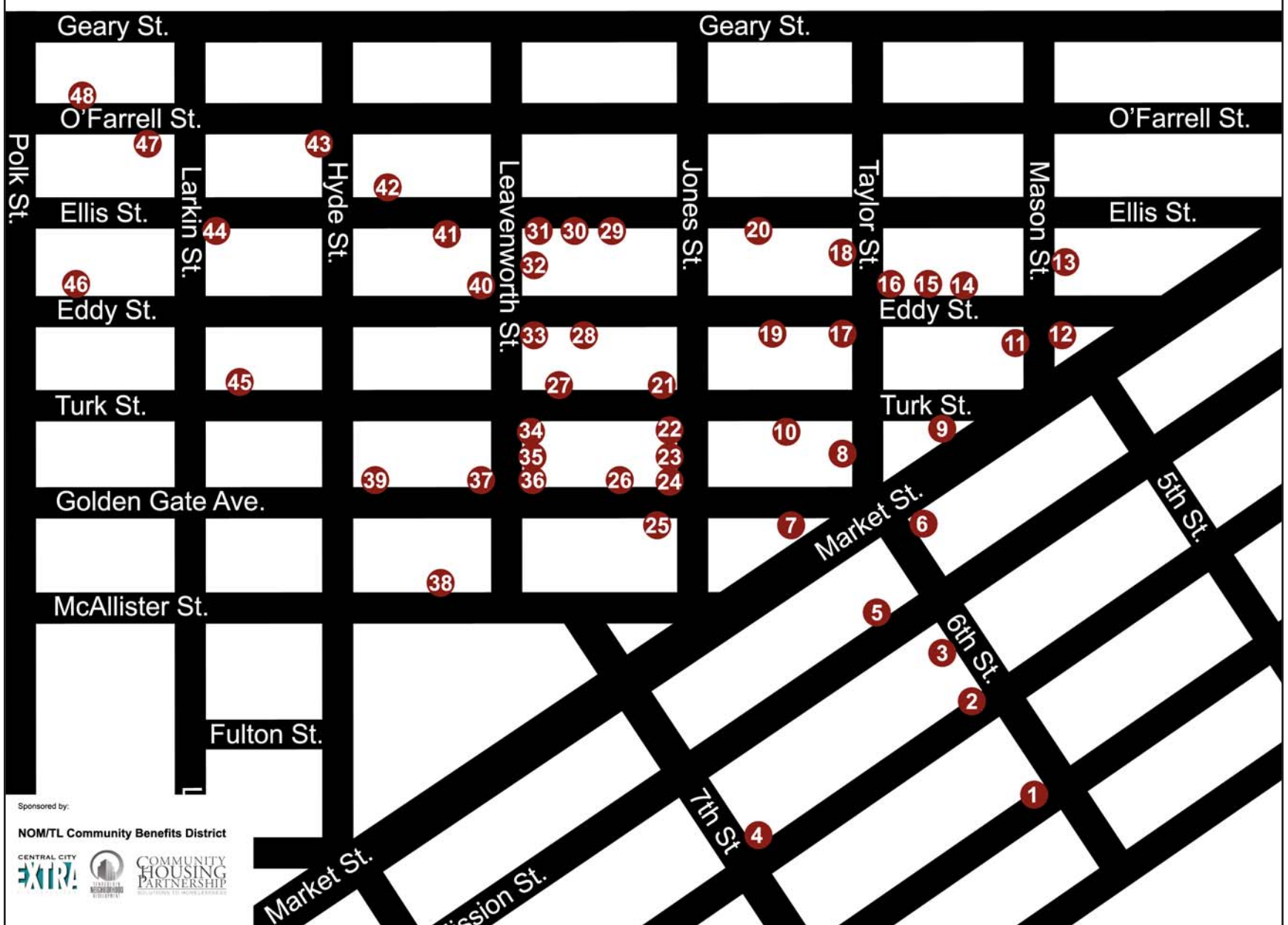
What is the Safe Haven Campaign?

We start from a standpoint that everyone deserves to walk the streets in safety. Safe Havens are rooted in the idea that it takes an entire community to increase the peace in our neighborhood. This means involving everyone in the solutions to the problems we face. We reject scapegoating and racial profiling. We reach out to working-families, seniors, small-business people, immigrants, straight and queer folks, service providers, housed and homeless people, those struggling with addictions, and youth. We understand that people, who have at times in their lives participated in activities that have harmed the community, can also play a role in improving it.

The problems we face in the Central City area weren't started by any single group, so they can't be solved by any single group either. We organize for solutions that are effective, socially just, and provide alternatives to the endless cycles of violence and incarceration.

Safe Haven sites are small businesses, churches, non-profit offices, residential hotels, and other places in the **Central City** that have designated themselves as a **safe place** for community members. If you ever have a physical emergency or feel threatened or endangered, you can visit one of these 48 sites for **"15 minutes and a phone call."**

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1. Gene Friend Recreation Center - 270 Sixth St | 17. TNDC admin office - 201 Eddy St | 33. Empire Market - 399 Eddy St |
| 2. City Produce - 174 Sixth St | 18. TNDC admin office - 215 Taylor St | 34. Peerless Hardware - 156 Leavenworth St |
| 3. Due Chinese Food - 1001 Market St | 19. Downtown Grocery - 289 Eddy St | 35. Art Studio/CCHH - 146 Leavenworth St |
| 4. Tony Baloney's - 1098 Howard St | 20. Youth With a Mission - 357 Ellis St | 36. Big Boy Market - 180 Golden Gate Ave |
| 5. SF Print - 1008 Mission St | 21. CCDC - 201 Turk St | 37. Shih-yu Lang YMCA - 220 Golden Gate Ave |
| 6. Donut World - 995 Market St | 22. LA Café - 201 Turk St | 38. Celtic Coffee - 142 McAllister St |
| 7. San Cristina Hotel - 1000 Market St | 23. Boys and Girls Club - 115 Jones St | 39. Morty's Deli - 280 Golden Gate Ave |
| 8. EZ Pizza - 39 Taylor St | 24. Mercy Housing - 111 Jones St | 40. 168 New Star Restaurant - 400 Eddy St |
| 9. Central City SRO Collaborative - 48 Turk St | 25. St. Boniface Church - 133 Golden Gate Ave | 41. Senator Hotel - 519 Ellis St |
| 10. Rescue Mission Thriftstore - 162 Turk St. | 26. NOM/TL CBD - 135 Golden Gate Ave | 42. Tuong Phong Market - 628 Ellis St |
| 11. Ambassador Hotel - 55 Mason St | 27. Hospitality House - 290 Turk St | 43. J and D Market - O'Farrell St at Hyde |
| 12. Little Delhi - 83 Eddy St | 28. Hamlin Hotel - 385 Eddy St | 44. Essex Hotel - 684 Ellis St |
| 13. Café.com - 120 Mason St | 29. Barber Shop - 495 Ellis St | 45. Coalition On Homelessness - 468 Turk St |
| 14. Empress Hotel - 144 Eddy St | 30. Cambridge Hotel - 473 Ellis St | 46. Arnett Watson Apartments - 650 Eddy St |
| 15. William Penn - 160 Eddy St | 31. Grocery Store - 491 Ellis St | 47. Iroquois Hotel - 835 O'Farrell St |
| 16. Cool Super - 199 Eddy St | 32. Kim Huang Café Shop - 325 Leavenworth St | 48. Bread and Butter Market - 888 O'Farrell St |



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31 TL pantries: 2.5 million pounds of food in '09

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

double the number six years ago. A pantry is simply a group of people who get food from the Food Bank. Founded in 1987, the Food Bank delivers enough produce and staples to feed 22,000 households a week, about 7% of the city's total.

A quarter of the pantries are in the central city, 31 in the Tenderloin and 18 South of Market. Of these 49 pantries, 26 are held at supportive housing sites, either SROs or apartment buildings; 10, called Brown Bag Pantries, are in seniors-only housing; six are targeted to children and offered at schools, child care centers and family service agencies; five are at churches and community centers; and two are at immigrant-serving agencies.

Tenderloin pantries gave away almost 2.5 million pounds of food to 2,769 people in the 12 months beginning in October 2008 — that's about 17 pounds of food a week per person. The South of Market pantries have equivalent weekly totals, putting 1.6 million pounds of food on the tables of 1,750 residents.

Besides its pantry network, the Food Bank operates five other programs, including a popular shopping program: Staff of 200 nonprofits that serve meals to the poor plus about 100 pantry coordinators shop

weekly at the Food Bank's 55,000-square-foot warehouse in Dogpatch, at 23rd and Pennsylvania, a cavernous space that can hold 220 million pounds of food.

The shoppers buy staples by the pound — rice and beans for 18 cents, for example, oats for 22 cents, bread for 4 cents — and peanut butter at \$16.56 for a case of 12 jars, and much more. Pantry coordinators who shop are supplementing the basic groceries that the Food Bank delivers to every pantry, whether its staff come in to shop or not.

The basics include produce that comes into the warehouse in stunning quantities. Last summer, the Food Bank's Website announced "40,320 pounds of artichokes today!" And soon after: "First stone fruit of the season — 38,000 pounds of fresh peaches!" and "Today's fruit of the day — 1,980 cases of grapes!"

The Food Bank gets this produce from two sources. Twice a week, its truck stops at the nearby San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market and picks up more than 12,000 pounds of fresh fruit and vegetables that are slightly misshapen, too small to be sold or otherwise not sellable. For 10 years, the market's been putting aside this bounty for the Food Bank.

The other source is through Farm to Family, a four-year-old California Association of Food Banks program started by Gary Maxworthy, a San Francisco Food Bank board member.

Today, California's 40 food banks buy imperfect, but perfectly fresh, produce from 80 growers and packers participating in Farm to Family. The food banks pay next to nothing: 40 pounds of apples for the retail cost of one jar of apple sauce, for example.

ADOPT-A-PANTRY

The San Francisco Food Bank distributed 36.5 million pounds of food in 2009, half of it fresh produce, enough for 80,000 meals a day. That's up 30% from 18 months ago when The Extra reported on the Empress Hotel's food pantry.

The Empress is a "shopping pantry." Bessie Carmichael is not. Citywide, almost half the 200 pantries' coordinators rarely or never shop because they have no budget for the extra groceries.

Those who do shop come to the warehouse the day before they hold their pantry, buying as supplements what they know suits clients best or what the clients ask for — prepared foods that SRO residents can cook in microwaves, dry beans for apartment dwellers with stoves, low-sugar snacks for diabetics, foods that will appeal to picky kids. The Food Bank likes shoppers — it means added income to buy more groceries to distribute free.

For the shopping and nonshopping pantries alike, warehouse workers fill boxes and bags based on the number the pantry serves, what's on hand, and what Food Bank coordinators and their pantry colleagues believe is most appropriate to a pantry's clients. Trucks deliver the pallets of food the next day.

The Food Bank's mandate is to feed the hungry, but with shrinking monetary dona-

tions and erratic food prices, shopping trumps nonshopping. The Food Bank now pushes new pantries that can afford it to shop and is looking at how to get more established pantries to head for the warehouse.

One way is through Adopt-a-Pantry.

"We looked at the disparity of distribution — which pantries were shopping and why," said Aaron Rashba, the Food Bank's major gifts officer. "Pantries affiliated with — institutions or agencies that can fundraise more readily were shopping because they had some money to buy the supplemental food that we sell."

Adopt-a-Pantry asks individuals, groups or companies to pick one of the 95 non-shopping pantries and give them enough money so their coordinator can buy groceries to add to the weekly offerings. This has donor appeal because the adoption money is restricted to specific sites, the results immediate and tangible.

Seventeen of the adoptables are in the Tenderloin and SoMa (see sidebar).

There's no fixed amount, but the donation should be enough that the pantry participants can feel the difference, \$2,000 to \$20,000, Rashba says.

With \$7,000, for example, a weekly pantry can get a greater variety of food to 50 to 60 families for a year. The tax-deductible donation goes to the Food Bank, which then opens a warehouse account and the adopted pantry runs a tab.

The program is nearly a year old and two sites have been adopted: Noe Valley Ventures, a giving circle of eight families, adopted the pantry at Sanchez Elementary School in the Mission District; and a group of families recruited by a Food Bank board member adopted the pantry at Westside Court, a low-income housing development in the Western Addition.

Rashba says potential donors are looking seriously at five additional sites.

MEAT, BREAD COVETED

A few blocks from Bessie Carmichael at The Rose Hotel on Sixth Street, another adoptable pantry, caseworker Michael Powell gets things organized for the 40 people in line for groceries. More than 30 are hotel residents or their guests, the rest neighborhood people. The Rose, a 75-unit SRO owned and operated by Mercy Services, won't turn away anyone who is hungry.

"We used to have about 24 people in the pantry line," Powell said. He, too, wasn't surprised that the number for the Wednesday giveaway has almost doubled. "If we get adopted, I know what I'll shop for. It's what our residents are always asking for but what we can rarely provide — meat, cheese, bread, healthy snack items."

This day's pantry items are similar to the school's, with the addition of fresh green tomatoes, canned cranberry sauce, microwavable rice bowls, fiber drinks and the coveted loaves of bread. Three members of Toolworks, an agency that serves disabled adults, help people fill their bags.

"This food really helps me," said

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Weekly pantry food helps round out meals for Rose Hotel resident Leroy Smith.



PHOTO BY MARJORIE BEGGS

The Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP is a state-sponsored, volunteer-supported program that provides free counseling to people with Medicare about their benefits, rights and options, and other health insurance related questions. HICAP provides unbiased information to help you make an informed decision for your individual health care needs.

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San Francisco

18 SoMa pantries: 1.6 million pounds of food in '09

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Yolanda Villasenor, who has lived at The Rose for two years and said that with her fixed income, food barely stretches to the end of the month. "I may go buy a little meat to add to the rice bowl."

Laurence Heard, a Rose resident since 1997, says there's plenty of variety in the weekly pantry, though he, too, would like more meat. Once, he recalled, there were turkey links, a special treat to him.

"No question — this is our most popular program at the Rose," said Keith Bussey, the hotel's support services manager.

For any food left on the tables after everyone has gone through the line, people queue for seconds. This day, the leftover bounty is likely to include produce from the two 50-pound sacks of onions and one 50-pound bag of potatoes. One man said he'd make a pile of potato salad.

After people have a shot at seconds, unclaimed food is left out for a few hours after the pantry officially closes for the day.

"We leave it on the table and it will go," Bussey said with certainty.

NO LEFTOVERS

The outdoor food pantry line at Hospitality House's Tenderloin Self Help Center, at 290 Turk St., stretches up the block to Leavenworth and moves glacially. People holding small orange tickets are still waiting their turn an hour after a metal door is rolled up, exposing a small, unfinished garage piled high with food.

Unlike the line at Bessie Carmichael, where many parents tote babies and seem to know each other, and the one at The Rose, where fellow hotel residents banter while they wait, this is a line of mostly strangers. They're quiet, serious-looking, and they shift their weight and crane their necks to see what food is up ahead at this Wednesday's pantry, which the center calls "Veggie Day."

Apples and potatoes, celery, canned vegetables, dry white rice, stove-top stuffing, chocolates and whole chickens cram the tiny space. Three volunteers and April Valentine, activities peer advocate, make sure everyone gets a chicken, if they want it, and some of each of the other items.

Standing apart from the line, a man talks loudly. He says some people will take a chicken and try to sell it around the corner.

"This isn't an issue I've dealt with," center Program Manager Elvis Byrd told The Extra. "But we have the attitude that once we give hungry people food to eat, it's theirs."

The center used to hand out pre-filled bags on pantry days, but Valentine now sets up the food farmers' market-style so people can take what they want.

"There's no waste — we almost never have leftovers," Byrd said. "But there are favorites: meat of any kind, sweets, yogurt, cookies."

Everyone who walks away with groceries smiles and thanks pantry volunteers. Still, little glitches happen. A woman gets to the

front of the line but has no ticket and insists she never got one. Valentine, who handed out the tickets, stays calm. "It's not fair to the others," she tells the woman several times. After protesting for another 30 seconds, the woman wanders off up the street.

"Sure, the need is getting greater — I think about half the people in our line are homeless," Byrd said. "Last year, our weekly pantry numbers held steady at around 50 people. Now it's way above 60." Valentine says the number in line this day was more like 100.

A woman halfway back in the line wonders aloud, to no one in particular, "Is there bread up there today? I like bread."

For the holiday, local bread companies donated 11,000 whole wheat loaves to the Food Bank, according to Media Manager Stacy Newman. The precious staple went only so far. The Rose Hotel pantry got some. Bessie Carmichael and Tenderloin Self Help didn't.

As the line dwindled, a neatly dressed senior approached Valentine and asked politely, "Is this line just for people who live in the Tenderloin? Or is it for anyone? Do you just get in line?"

Valentine explained that anyone was welcome to come and take a ticket. The man thanked her and said he'd be back next week.

Hunger is real and, for many, persistent. One more statistic: Between 2006 and 2008, the number of seniors in America living alone who visited food pantries jumped 81% — from 225,000 to 408,000.

The mailer in the San Francisco Food Bank's year-end request for donations quoted a regular pantry-user: "Too much month at the end of the money." ■



PHOTO BY MARJORIE BEGGS

At the end of the Bessie Carmichael pantry line, Maria Cecilia Bautista has two bags full of food for her family.

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Central City Hospitality House's



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'Doing away with private cars s

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

they want no part in.

"No one from the city came in here and told us what they were going to do," said Andrew Vasquez, a long-time employee at Kick's clothing store, at 1071 Market St. "They just went about doing it. Business is bad, and with the street closures it's ridiculous. Instead of giving us customers, they're pushing them away."

"Bicyclists really love this," Papandreou said, "so do taxi drivers. People say that now they can hear the birds and the sound of stilettos."

"We have the data for autos, pedestrians and bicyclists. What is happening at the storefront level is what we need you people to tell us."

So Central City Extra interviewed a number of mid-Market merchants to hear how the city's improvement efforts have affected their businesses. What we learned is that not one merchant wants cars off Market Street, and none could discern an effect on their business. ■

TAQUERIA CANCUN, 1003 Market St.

MANAGER Roberto Barcas said the traffic calming has had "no effect" on the burrito and taco business at Sixth and Market streets. The only change is that he sees more people on the street now. "But business — it's the same." ■

ELECTROMANIA, 1083 Market St.

KYONG Son Pak emigrated from Korea in 1983. He's owned and operated Electromania, a TV, DVD, music system, cell phone and camera outlet on Market near Seventh Street for more than 20 years. He doesn't think traffic rerouting is a meaningful response to the mid-Market Street blight.

"The city doesn't do enough to help the small businesses along this part of Market Street. The city gets more sales taxes from the big corporations than from the small store owners." He cited the irony of the city's anti-auto policy and the requests of CityPlace to build underground parking two blocks away. "The big corporations, the Wal-Marts, need the people to drive automobiles, so they need parking," he said.

Pak has observed the traffic-calming at work since it started in late September.

"The city has parking officers at Eighth Street and at Sixth Street all day. It would be better to have foot patrol officers on Market, one at Seventh and one at Sixth Street, then people could walk and shop."

"Look up the block. Every day they are selling stolen merchandise on the corner. At least once a month there's a robbery, or a stabbing on the corner. The city buys hotel rooms for people in the Tenderloin and a lot of those people come here during the day."

"Some drink too much, some do drugs,



James Patrick's family has been in business on Market Street since 1873. "Traffic isn't causing businesses to fail," he says.



Al Choi's godfather opened the store. "Traffic isn't causing businesses to fail, not fewer cars, is what matters."

some treat the street like a restroom. Every day I clean in front of the store. Market Street won't be better until people get better. On Sundays it's dead. No cars, no people walking and shopping. Doing away with private cars seems silly. After all, it's a street." ■

CIGARETTES FOR LESS, 1053 Market St.

PETER Azar, who's managed his brother's smoke shop for seven years, said November was definitely slower than usual.

But he isn't ready yet to attribute it to the city's pilot project: "Most of our traffic is foot traffic. Still, I don't understand their point — I wish someone from the city would come down here and tell us." ■

PATRICK & CO., 1390 Market St.

PATRICK & Co. has been a fixture in San Francisco since 1873. James Patrick, grandson of the founder, and his son Jamie oversee their two office supply stores on Market Street — one in the Financial District, the other at Fox Plaza.

The venerable mid-Market strip seems to be at an all-time low, James Patrick says, estimating that ground-floor vacancy could be as high as 80%-90%. "About 7 or 8 p.m., just count the rolling doors that are down — it's not rocket science," he says. "But we do think that Market is a good street historically. It will be much worse if there's no traffic."

He's not in favor of the recent closure to private auto traffic. "It will reduce the vitality of Market Street all along the street," Patrick says.

"You need the vitality to sustain the businesses. What will happen is it will become sparsely traveled other than taxis, streetcars and bikes. People will cross the street at random and you'll have a whole other set of problems."

"Traffic isn't causing businesses to fail. Would you rather have girlie shows and no traffic, or businesses and traffic?... When Mary Jane from Walnut Creek wants to come to San Francisco, she wants the confidence that she can get across Market Street easily." Without that, Patrick figures, "she'll go to Walnut Creek shopping instead."

He mentions that he supported the recently defeated Measure D that would have illuminated the strip with flashy signage. What the area needs, he says, is "the willingness of the building department and city fathers to consider good development strategies for the area, and they've chosen not to do that," he said, citing a defeated redevelopment area proposal. "Make it less expensive to build — we need businesses there." ■

HIDDEN TREASURES, 1015 Market St.

HIDDEN Treasures, a store filled with handcrafted clothing and jewelry from India, Tibet and Africa, nests on Market near Sixth Street. Eddie, the owner and proprietor, does-

Electromania
owner Kyong Son Pak, below, would rather have beat cops on the corners than to ban cars on Market Street.



eems silly. After all, it's a street'



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

Jewelry store more than 40 years ago. He says more Market Street needs.

it more lively. There are all kinds of characters who lead [prospective] customers to run away. Once a month, we should have some kind of street fair that can attract people." The weekly Civic Center farmers' market doesn't do enough to bring shoppers to the area, he said.

The street "has a wonderful national heritage," he said. "But right now it's a mess."

Citing New York's revitalization of Times Square in the '90s, he said that if "someone like Rudy Giuliani had the political will," the situation here might be different. Instead, he said, "it looks like a deserted town, with a lot of stores closed for years." ■

PIPER'S JEWELERS, 1066 Market St.

"THE biggest challenge besides the homeless is parking," says Al Choi, manager of Piper's Jewelers. "We have very large sidewalks here, but there isn't much foot traffic. People would rather go somewhere more convenient."

More parking, not fewer cars, is the key to revitalizing Market Street, he said. He suggested reducing sidewalk size and installing diagonal parking spaces to give the area a much-needed lift.

Ralph Piper, Choi's godfather, opened the store in the 1960s, and Choi has managed it for about 10 years.

"You see people less and less every day," he said. "This is not a spot most people want to come to." The pilot program, he believes, is partly responsible for the recent decrease. ■

DOLCE & SALATO, 1145 Market St.

DOLCE & Salato used to be Caffe Trinity at 1145 Market St. since the 1980s. Erin Sherwood has worked at Dolce & Salato since Trinity was reincarnated in January 2009. Business is good — "We ARE making it," Sherwood said cheerfully, "though it started to fall off a couple of months ago and just now seems to be coming back."

Sherwood said she assumed the drop in business had something to do with BART and Bay Bridge changes. Until The Extra told her, she didn't even know about the traffic changes on Market Street right in front of the cafe.

"I don't think car drivers can even see us anyway, so the lack of cars probably doesn't affect us," she said.

But pedestrians and bicyclists — that's another story. If doing away with private vehicles on this stretch is proven to increase the number of people walking and pedaling, Sherwood believes cafe patronage would increase substantially. ■

RENOIR HOTEL, 45 McAllister St.

BYRON Yee, manager of the 18-year-old Renoir Hotel at Market and Seventh St.,

hasn't noticed any shift in his businesses fortunes lately, but he still has sharp opinions about the project.

"It's ridiculous," Yee said. "If you're going to keep it as a bike and bus thoroughfare, you're going to have to put some controls in there. You can't just close off Market Street."

Yee said the idea of installing green pods for outdoor seating areas with greenery was a "nice thought, but you have to work around the real problems first. Green pods are not a solution."

It is grubby, misbehaving street people that are the damper, he says. Yee spent years studying the street. He was chair of the Mid-Market Project Area Committee that worked 10 years on a Redevelopment Agency plan from Fifth to Tenth street. But the plan was buried by the Board of Supervisors.

"The street needs to get rid of vagrants," Yee said. "Not all of them are homeless."

"The police started more foot patrols a year ago and that was great," Yee said, standing in the lobby of the 100-year-old building as workers hung holiday wreaths while a cold rain fell outside.

"People talk about a pedestrian mall but that can't happen until we take care of certain issues. Another one is lighting. (Market Street) is not conducive for safe walking. Embarcadero to Fourth Street is still pretty dark and it's dark around here, too. Brightening it up will help get people going into shops and businesses."

Yee believes that before there can be a successful revitalization, the city needs to start offering better incentives to Market Street property owners. ■

MARKET STREET DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION, 870 Market St.

"RIGHT now, we haven't gotten a lot of feedback about the traffic restrictions," said Carolyn Diamond, executive director of the association that represents many businesses along the Market Street corridor. "Some retailers are saying they don't see a difference, but it's also a time of year when they're really busy, so it's hard to tell what the numbers mean."

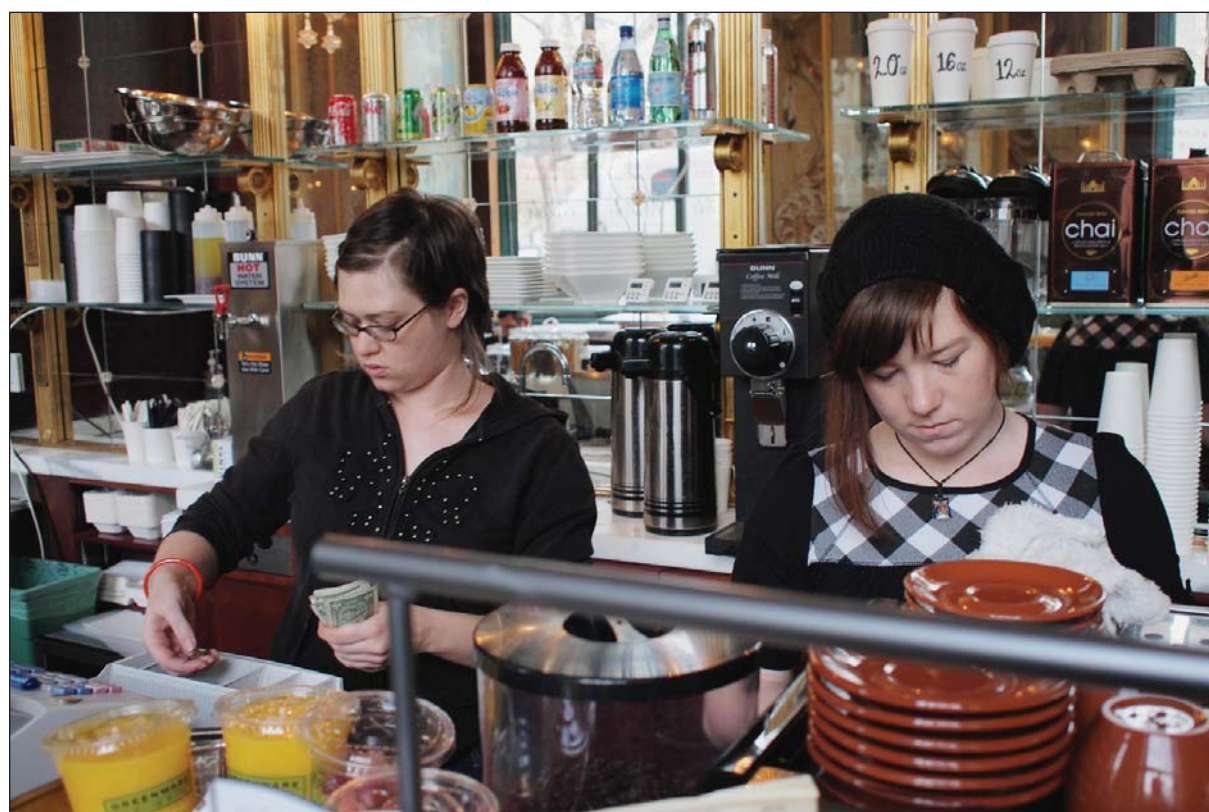
She's sure that all her members would like more information about extending the car restrictions. "There is some fear and trepidation about it," she said.

Diamond also believes the city isn't doing enough to acknowledge the "elephant in the room — public safety," citing the stabbing of mural artist Jason Hailey in November. "You've got to address that issue if you want the street to be commercially viable." ■

—Merchant interviews were conducted by Daniel Powell, Mark Hedin, Jonathan Newman, Tom Carter and Marjorie Beggs.

Below: Erin Sherwood, right, and Jessica Deckert work the counter at Dolce do Salato. Sherwood didn't know cars were banned in front of her restaurant.

Center: Himalayan Treasures' owner doesn't think the city should be worrying about cars on Market Street with so many other problems on the street.



PHOTOS BY LENNY LIMJOCO

LORETTA FLORENCE PHILLIPS
Activist wife of Tenderloin activist

Loretta Florence Phillips, one of the Alexander Residence's longest-residing tenants, overcame a crippling childhood and conquered alcoholism to eventually find peace and stability in the Tenderloin.

Mrs. Phillips began life in New Orleans in 1922 with two strikes against her. She was born with polio, and her mother died in childbirth. The devastating viral infection that put people in leg braces and iron lungs knew no class. It also afflicted opera star Renata Tibaldi in 1922 and Franklin Delano Roosevelt the year before.

"Her father gave her up to a convent," said Marvis Phillips, her husband, after her Nov. 13 memorial at the Alexander, where she lived more than 30 years. "But she was determined to walk as a little girl — and she did. She never had to have braces."

The plucky Mrs. Phillips rebounded from other misfortune as a youngster.

Mr. Phillips said the father reclaimed her at age 6 and moved to Chicago.

"Her father raped her when she was 13 and she had a child," Phillips said. "Then the father kicked her out when she was 18 and she was homeless in Chicago before they had adequate welfare. The authorities took her child away and she never saw her child again."

No details of Mrs. Phillips' life came to light during the memorial conducted by Father Armando Lopez of St. Boniface Catholic Church. More than 60 attended. Songs were sung and prayers said, but mourners weren't offered the opportunity to speak



Loretta Florence Phillips

of their affection for Mrs. Phillips, who died Nov. 6 at California Pacific Medical Center after a long illness. She was 87.

Mrs. Phillips had been an active member of the North of Market Planning Coalition and the Alexander Tenants Association, and she was a charter member of the Central City Democrats and a founding member of Alliance for a Better District 6. At meetings, she was a familiar sight at her activist husband's side. Once homeless, she was avidly interested in the Tenderloin Homeless Caucus.

Her husband doesn't know when Mrs. Phillips arrived in California. He knew that when he met her she had been married three times and was an alcoholic. He believes her wakeup call came while doing six months in jail for being drunk and kicking a policeman in the groin. She then quit through Alcoholics Anonymous and was sober for 25 years — until she died.

Marvis Phillips met his future wife in the Alexander lobby in 1992 when he was a new resident. The older woman came over and sat next to him and they struck up a conversation. It became a daily routine. Over months, they grew closer. He asked her to help him kick his drug habit, and she did.

"She was a certified drug rehabilitation counselor through AA," he said. "She showed me there was another way."

In March 1996, he went downstairs to the lobby and tapped her on the shoulder. When she turned around he got down on one knee and proposed.

"She was Mrs. Herron then," he said. "She said yes."

They were married two weeks later, March 19, 1996, in City Hall. The late Tenderloin police Sgt. Kenneth Sugrue, for whom the Civic Center children's park is named, was best man.

Marvis Phillips was with his wife when she died at the hospital. She was on a respirator and could not speak but her eyes fluttered open when he was at her side.

"I held her hand," he said. "She looked at me and she mouthed the words, 'I love you.' And then she was gone." ■

—TOM CARTER

JOHN MELONE
A tireless force for seniors

For a man who publicly pushed as hard as he could for others, especially seniors, John Melone kept an exceptionally low personal profile. When he died Oct. 8 at a hospice in Richmond, the Contra Costa County Coroner's Office could find no relatives. Neither could staff at Canon Kip in San Francisco, where he had been first a client, then a volunteer for many years.

At the Nov. 12 memorial for Mr. Melone at Universal Unitarian Church, speaker after speaker praised his tenacity and feistiness in advocating for senior housing and health care rights. Personal anecdotes were spare.

"John just didn't talk about himself," said Hene Kelly, board member of Senior Action Network and the California Alliance for Retired Americans. "But he did the job of many. You can be sure, John will not rest in peace. He's an organizer, so you can enjoy yourself when you get there. He fought for all of us."

Mr. Melone, a Vietnam vet, was 74 when he died from complications of liver cancer and brain cancer.

More than 50 people gathered in the modern, airy church community room for the memorial, which began with music from the Canon Kip Senior Band and introductions by the Rev. Glenda Hope of S.F. Network Ministries and Zen Buddhist priest Jana, who co-officiated.

"John was a friend of mine, a political ally, one of the first volunteers for our computer center 15 years ago," Hope said. "It was John who had the idea that we should have seniors-only time at the center, and he helped people fix their computers."

Mr. Melone had come through "some tough stuff — homelessness and painful illnesses," Hope said later. "He could be a curmudgeon sometimes, clashing with clients, but he was someone you could always talk to. He was a voice for the voiceless."

Mr. Melone also spent hours at the computer at Senior Action Network, where he was an activist for 10 years and a board member for five. He tracked senior-related legislation rigorously, sending copious email messages and complicated legislative attachments to fellow activists.

"We fought a lot," said Jodi Reid, executive director of Northern California Alliance for Retired Americans. "This man was stubborn and that's what made him so committed. He forced me to figure out his legislative summaries and Excel spreadsheets." And, she said, for that she thanked him.

Barbara Blong, Senior Action Network executive director, called Mr. Melone "a force to be reckoned with. It was John who put us on the map."

People's remembrances were filled with pugilistic motifs.

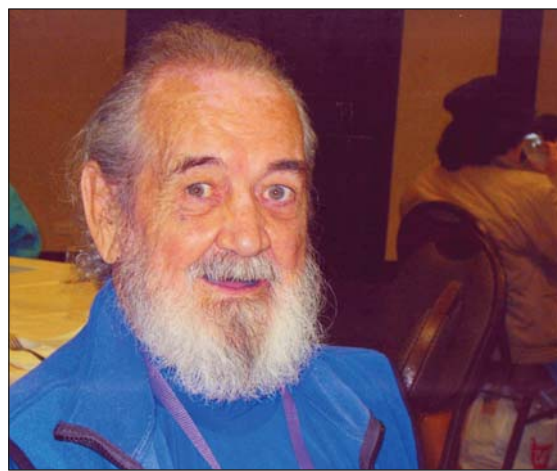
"John was a fighter — I'd see him every day at SAN, checking his computer to see what was going on in Sacramento," said James Chionsini, Planning for Elders health care action team member. "He was one of those people who came out swinging and never stopped. He's probably up there organizing right now."

As a Senior Action Network board member, Mr. Melone represented SAN at South of Market Project Area Committee, which advises the Redevelopment Agency.

SOMPAC Parliamentarian Raymon Smith called Mr. Melone "a true warrior, a sincere man who walked the walk and brought invaluable insights." Smith sang a few bars from the song "Kansas City," which he said reminded him of how Mr. Melone tackled issues: "I might take a train, I might take a plane, but if I have to walk, I'm goin' just the same."

"John got to meetings however he could," Smith added. "He never accepted that something couldn't be done."

Others besides seniors benefited from Mr. Melone's hard work at SOMPAC. Alex Torres, executive director of Bindlestiff Studio, attended the memorial to honor the memory of Mr. Melone. Torres credits him with helping Bindlestiff, the 10-year-old performance company of emerging Pilipino and Filipino American artists, get a permanent home



John Melone

in the Plaza Apartments at Sixth and Howard streets. "John was fair when considering Bindlestiff," Torres said. "He didn't just give us a pass — he asked good questions, and when he understood us, he supported us."

Another part of Mr. Melone's life came to light through Michael Lyon, who said they met at S.F. General Hospital when Lyon was a medical equipment repairman. "John was a social worker in the AIDS clinic and other places in the hospital — he seemed to be everywhere and always active," Lyon said. "I'll miss his sense of urgency."

San Francisco was just one base for Mr. Melone's activism. A Richmond resident for many years, he earned kudos for his Contra Costa County work on behalf of seniors and, after he died, a commendation from the county Board of Supervisors, which Arnie Kasendorf, chairman of the Richmond Commission on Aging and president of the Richmond AARP, read aloud at the memorial.

San Francisco and state officials weighed in, too, to remember Mr. Melone.

"He was a gift to our city, especially to those who are struggling and those who have the least," Supervisor Chris Daly told the mourners at the memorial. "He was a real hero of those without anything."

Hene Kelly read a California Assembly tribute to Mr. Melone, signed by Tom Ammiano, and a Senate certificate of recognition signed by Mark Leno. "John loved tracking their legislation — for health, housing, benefits — and they appreciated him," she said.

Kelly also introduced David Phillips, whom Mr. Melone met 28 years ago in San Francisco: "When David was struggling with drugs and was homeless, John invited David to come live with him and found him a job at the Chronicle," she said. "Later, when Mr. Melone was homeless himself, David invited him to live with him in Richmond."

She described a tiny computer flash drive that she carries in her purse, a gift from Phillips to her after Mr. Melone's death. He wore the drive, which holds a huge collection of legislation files, on a lanyard around his neck so he'd have access to the information as he moved from computer to computer.

"I also have some of John's ashes," Kelly said. "I think I'll place some of them where John always tried, but never managed, to get in — in Sen. Feinstein's and Gov. Schwarzenegger's offices." ■

—MARJORIE BEGGS

LUKE SMITH
Elm Hotel's happiest resident

Luke Smith's daughter broke into tears two years ago when she chanced upon her father, who she hadn't seen since she was 11 years old, walking near Boeddeker Park.

At 28, Gloria Smith got her father back. And Mr. Smith, as his health later deteriorated, got a loving caretaker for months — until he died.

But it was hard to say by looking at him whether Mr. Smith was any happier after their chance meeting. He was a rare person with the gift of happiness; he was forever smiling.

Gloria Smith said at her father's Nov. 3 memorial that he had left the family of six, all living together in the Tenderloin, in the early 1980s. There had been no contact with him and his whereabouts were unknown. Several family members live outside of the city now, she said.

After the reunion, the father and daughter saw each other "off and on," Ms. Smith said. It was only after Mr. Smith's health seriously declined, when he was making three hospital trips a week for kidney dialysis treatments, that she began to care for him

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

and they grew closer.

It was a role reversal from what she remembered best of their former life.

"He took care of our hair back then," said Ms. Smith. "And he tried to weave his hair, even if he didn't have enough."

Mr. Smith died Oct. 27 at the age of 55 in his third floor room in the Elm Hotel. Ms. Smith, his only child at the memorial, said drugs and alcohol had weakened his liver. A neighbor said he also had diabetes.

Ms. Smith said that despite his trademark smile, her father's favorite hobby was watching horror movies. He had "too many," nearly 200 films.

"They were stacked, VHS and DVDs combined," said Deandre Jones, Ms. Smith's boyfriend, who also saw Mr. Smith regularly.

The memorial's dozen mourners remembered Mr. Smith as uncommonly upbeat — he was always smiling, never argued and was cordial, giving advice or inviting somebody to just hang out.

"He always offered a good thought or a good



Luke Smith and his daughter Gloria Smith

feeling, no matter what your day was like," said one man.

Another resident, who met Mr. Smith a year ago, said, "He told me, 'You're always welcome to come over.'"

"He was a part of the community, and he wasn't reclusive," said Scott Ecker, the Elm's support services director. "He had a lot of friends here and was well liked."

Kenneth Lawrence, who lived across from Mr. Smith, said that he still waits for his neighbor to walk out his door.

"I used to look at him like he was stuck on stupid," said Lawrence. "I couldn't understand why he was always so damn happy. Even when he went to the trash room to take out the trash, he was still smiling." ■

—KAREN DATANGEL

RAYMOND PUGLIESI
Godfather of the Empress

Raymond "Tony" Pugliesi was a lot of things — a motorcycle gang member, bodybuilder, fix-it man, entrepreneur, addict and alcohol abuser — but to a special few he was "the godfather" of the Empress Hotel.

When residents and outsiders he knew told him they had a need, Mr. Pugliesi invited them to his fourth-floor room for an appointment. The room

was cluttered with nuts, bolts, little tools and crates of gadgets, plus a dozen cell phones and land line phones for his "businesses," as he called his jack-of-all-trades enterprise.

Mr. Pugliesi had a sharp mathematical mind and could fix anything electronic, charging from \$1 to \$3, said his In-Home Supportive Services worker, Phillip Allen Jr., after Mr. Pugliesi's Nov. 10 memorial service at the Empress. He sold broken things he had found and fixed, batteries he recharged, too. He always had projects going. The phones linked up his "networks" of people, who sought his advice and knowledge.

Mr. Pugliesi — the godfather — sat in the middle of the room in his elaborate, jerry-rigged wheelchair wearing a yellow hardhat. He'd have Allen sit quietly in the corner like a consigliere. Then he'd beckon the petitioner to "come and sit."

"He'd listen," Allen said, "then make a decision and usually give them what they asked for — money, a phone, a drink of expensive stuff, or just help them if they wanted to start a little business. And he'd give them advice. He'd look over at me to make sure I saw and heard everything, like he wanted me to tell the story someday."

Some, like adopted children, returned three and four times.

"He never expected anything in return," Allen said. "He told me he was trying to salvage the last vestige of good in them. Some took advantage of him. They ought to be here today and aren't."

Mr. Pugliesi was once a robust weightlifter who looked mean on a hog and wouldn't shun a fair fight. Many details of his life before he moved into the Empress four years ago remained unknown, but staff said he has family in Brooklyn and Illinois.

In recent months, drugs, alcohol and AIDS apparently took a toll. His health began to fail, he lost weight and was in pain he ignored. But nine days before he died, Allen said, he got clean and was full of life and optimism.

"I was really proud of him," Allen said. "Then Murphy's Law took over. He got despondent and wasn't eating right. I couldn't get him out of it."

When Mr. Pugliesi didn't answer calls for a couple of days, on Nov. 2 Allen and two staff members went into his room and found him dead. Mr. Pugliesi was 47. The medical examiner said cause of death was pending.

At his memorial, a few of Mr. Pugliesi's favorite things were on a table against the wall: a baseball cap with an embroidered marijuana leaf, a picture of a handsome white dog in a gold frame, a plastic toy three-wheel motorcycle and on it a buff rider with silver helmet and sunglasses, a small wooden box with a collage of tiny racecar pictures, a thick silver keychain with a marijuana leaf on the end. Behind these items was a bouquet of white mums, roses and carnations. On the wall were two pictures of the Brook-

lyn Bridge and a map of Brooklyn's neighborhoods.

Thirteen mourners attended his memorial. Several said they admired his generosity and craziness, which outweighed his sometimes "hard-ass" behavior.

A staff member distributed a printed tribute to Mr. Pugliesi with his picture on the sheet. Allen read aloud from it: "He lived his life like a roller-coaster, a wild unstoppable ride and a surprise at every turn. Unconventional, controversial, spirited, uniquely generous and stubborn, Raymond would never take no for an answer."

"All that is true," Allen said.

One neighbor recalled when Mr. Pugliesi got a squad of police with guns drawn to come charging up to his room, expecting real trouble.

"Tony was holed up in his room, laughing maniacally," the man said gleefully. He'd "glued his door shut" and covered the windows with black paper.

"Yeah," the neighbor said, "he was really enjoying himself."

"He was hard," said another man who used to get "blitzed" with him and could also call him by his nickname "Tony" with impunity. "But he wasn't hard. Someone in his presence that he liked, it was different. But he could make your life miserable if he was hard."

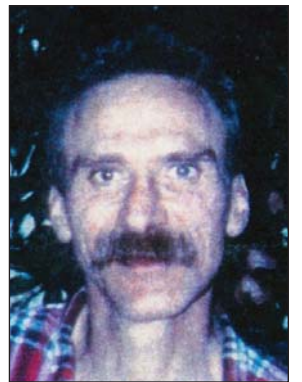
"He was generous from the heart," added another, "a cool dude with many characters."

A woman who once pushed him around the block said his wheelchair was "his spaceship." It had bells and whistles even "hidden daggers," Allen said, "in case he got caught in the red light district with his pants down."

"He was comfortable in his own skin," the woman said. "He had no conscience to worry about."

"And when he was the godfather," Allen said, "the only thing missing was the theme song." ■

—TOM CARTER



Raymond Pugliesi

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MY TAKE

Mark Parsons

Food and loathing in the Tenderloin

THE daily migration around food in the Tenderloin is a sort of verbal chain letter requiring swift action and the ability to process dilemma without intellect.

To leave the line at St. Anthony's for a sandwich handout up the block can introduce so many variables that even a chess player would beg for mercy. Food is hurled out of the back of trucks, doors open, lines form, favors are extended and friendships broken over the daily chase and challenge for food.

A dash for pork chops at Glide, interrupted by a prayer (in exchange for a cookie) can result in missing the number handout and losing the momentum to stay on course.

Is the music in Boeddeker Park anchored by a bag lunch? Should I splurge today and buy a burger at Mimi's instead? Will the nuns with the curry show up at Civic Center on Sunday if it rains? In a world where a carpenter can get resurrected, can't a sandwich for the poor have mayonnaise?

Deep in the basements of love, where the two major players serve their meals, food is eaten, stuffed into pockets, packed into containers, hedged like Wall Street securities against the strategic realities of tomorrow's hunt.

At St. Anthony's, Pork Adobo is the sleight of hand that becomes Posole Pork. Hoisin Chicken is distinguished from Chicken Fricassee by a common spice: cornstarch. If you breed kangaroos with parakeets, then undercook their offspring, you have Glide's Sunday Meal. Served on chipped plastic trays, still wet from washing after the previous meal, it occurs to me that perhaps Jesus didn't die for our sins — he just got sick of the food.

To suggest that, with few exceptions, this food might be simply awful is to risk the wrath and thunder of a predatory class of civil servant pension wannabes, well-intended volunteers, court-mandated thugs and, of course, the Church. The effort is enormous, involving hundreds of people, representing impressive amounts of money, both private and corporate and anointed by the Walter Cronkite of the business community, Warren Buffet who each year auctions a lunch with him for a million-dollar donation to Glide.

To suggest the effort has so overshadowed the result is to introduce theological ideas on suffering and redemption and to bring down the hammer of silence. Damaged, addicted, traumatized or poor, you have no voice, you have no taste buds; but you are magically imbued with a virtue by those who work on your behalf — and that is of being grateful.

Pissed off? Never.

Mistreated? No.

Disrespected? Certainly not.

You are Oliver Twist without the soundtrack. You are the meek and not only will you inherit the Earth, you will get to eat it as well.

On a corner, not so far away, the dreams of a grandmother, Ruth Brinker, live on. Much smaller in scale, not ambition, Project Open Hand's secular version of food delivery represents the possible without the intervention of the divine. Operating a food pantry, meal production and delivery service, there is a sense of organization, kindness and hope that would give an agnostic pause.

No dark basements here. The simple but mass-produced meals, even after being frozen, thawed and microwaved, are tasty to the point of suspicion. The pantry runs like a bingo game, where everyone is a winner.

Unlike Father Alfred at St. Anthony's who, 58 years ago, heard a voice that became "The Miracle on Jones Street," and traded the quality of the food for the hope of a "second miracle," someone at Project Open Hand put their finger in the soup and sang hallelujah. ■

Mark Parsons has lived — and eaten — in the Tenderloin for more than a year.

"My Take" is a new feature of The Extra that offers neighborhood writers an opportunity to reflect on life in the Tenderloin in 600 words or less. Email manuscripts to mytake@studycenter.org.



PHOTO BY TOM CARTER

The Trust for Public Land's Mary Muszynski shows Betty Traynor the mock-up of the makeover.

Ideas for \$3 million park makeover all in

It's unanimous: Fortress fence around Boeddeker must go

BY TOM CARTER

EVERYBODY agrees on one thing: Boeddeker Park's ugly, prison-like fence, inside and out, must go. Folks like the idea of a new clubhouse, too — but glassy and inviting, one that looks out over a park sporting a nice big lawn.

For real style, drop a sunken plaza smack in the middle of the 2½-acre park where people can lounge on its sloping sides while listening to live entertainment.

Residents saw an elaborate design of Boeddeker that looked something like this in 2007. But it was a fantasy exercise of some young local architects who did it for free. It wasn't meant to do anything but pique the imagination, and it did. It got people thinking about changes, and made them realize the park actually could be transformed.

Now, there's a design that includes their ideas, a \$3 million overhaul that is funded and spearheaded by the Trust for Public Land with Rec and Park cooperation. The design draft is the result of public input at five public outreach meetings.

PLAN TO ARTS COMMISSION

Trust officials say the draft could get tweaked, depending on the response of the final few neighborhood youth and senior focus groups scheduled for a presentation. The basic design will go to the Arts Commission for approval in Jan. 11 and eventually to the Board of Supervisors. The project timetable has the work starting next fall and finishing in 2011.

The hope for an \$8 million renovation project died when California's bond status plummeted some months ago. The trust had been confident the park would qualify for up to \$5 million from 2006 Prop 84 bond funds earmarked for park and water conservation. But, said Trust Project Manager Jake Gilchrist, applying for the money in the current market would risk an indefinite delay.

Gilchrist began attending Friends of Boeddeker Park meetings several years ago, looking for a city park in need. The trust would finance the upgrade with grants, bond money and private donations. Boeddeker was a perfect fit: central city location, low-income demographics, substantial senior and children populations and the requisite community committee that kept a faithful watch over the park.

The park hasn't changed much since the mid-1980s. And though activists have for years decried the drug-dealing, drinking and fighting, it wasn't until Gilchrist started showing up at the Friends of Boeddeker meetings that the design has been so heavily debated. Critics say the space is inefficiently used, the foreboding fencing is more suitable for a fortress, there's not enough green space, and the clubhouse — once besieged by drainage problems — is inadequately designed. And for most of the year, the park has been underused because

red ink reduced staff and hours of operation.

A grant from the San Francisco Parks Trust will help keep the whole park open on Saturdays 11 a.m. to around 4 p.m. through December.

The draft design opens the park up and makes it more inviting, a prime goal of the trust.

A mockup of the design was on display in the Boeddeker clubhouse at the fifth and final outreach meeting Oct. 20. Two signature characteristics had been eliminated: the wide brick walkway that divides the park, and the massive wrought iron entry gate at Eddy and Jones.

BIG LAWN, BASKETBALL COURT

An 80- by 45-foot lawn suitable for field hockey and soccer, and with a perimeter walk, would occupy that southwest corner. Above the lawn would be a high school-size basketball and all-purpose court. The sunken, amphitheater-like plaza, 35 feet across and also with a walkway around, would be in the middle of the park near a new clubhouse facing Eddy Street.

Brian Milman, project architect, said the clubhouse will be "3 or 4 feet" higher than the sidewalk so people stepping out of it and into the park will be on ground level. The one-story clubhouse will also have floor-to-ceiling glass walls and an attached recreation and exercise room next to the park entrance steps, or ramp, on Eddy.

Planned, too, is a "living roof" with plants and grasses that require little maintenance. Solar panels are being vetted for it.

Outdoor lighting is undecided as is the kind of replacement fencing.

The park's west and south sides will be lined with trees, "poplars, mostly," Milman said. "We'll keep just about all the trees."

THE SCULPTURES STAY

The two park sculptures will remain: Bruce Hasson's ark — animals sculpted in a dark granite block symbolizing the park as a sanctuary for families; and Anthony's Smith's globe with 12 inset faces representing the Tenderloin's diversity.

The park, which slopes 16 feet upward to Ellis Street, will be terraced every 3 to 4 feet, Milman said. The north sector next to the Preservation Senior Community would continue as a gardening site and space for arts and crafts.

More than 25 people attending the meeting voted on characteristics they'd like to see the park. On the wall, under four categories — fitness, fencing, clubhouse and landscape — the trust had put up 16 color prints of scenes from city parks. Each person was given four orange dots to stick on the images they liked.

The winner was landscape. A picture of beautifully flowering bushes on a patch of healthy grass got eight votes, the most of any image. ■

NOTICE: SECTION 8 VOUCHER HOLDERS

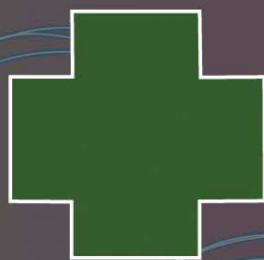
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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SPECIAL EVENTS

Boeddeker Park toy and gift giveaway for kids plus refreshments, Dec. 18, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Gifts are donations from the community. Info: 292-2019.

SOMArts Annual Holiday Party, Fri., Dec. 18, 934 Brannan St., 6-9 p.m. Bring a potluck dish to share and a wrapped white elephant gift (\$20 maximum value). Dinner, photo booth, other games. Info: 863-1414

Christmas caroling through the Tenderloin, Dec. 20, 4.30 p.m. Gather at 559 Ellis St. Sponsored by S.F. Network Ministries. Info: 928-6209.

Interfaith Memorial for All Our Homeless Dead, Dec. 21, 5.30 p.m., Civic Center. Sponsored by S.F. Network Ministries. Info: 928-6209.

10th annual meeting, Alliance for a Better District 6, Jan. 12, 6 p.m., 201 Turk St. Awards ceremony, door prizes, refreshments, election of officers. Info: 820-1560.

ART EVENTS

24th annual Japanese new year bell-ringing ceremony, Dec. 31, Asian Art Museum, 9:30-11 a.m. Help ring in the new year on the museum's 2,100-pound, 16th-century Japanese bronze bell that will be struck 108 times — out with the bad, in with the good. Free with museum admission (children under 12 admitted free). Info: asianart.org/bellringing.htm

Muralists' informational meeting for city's new Street SmARTS program, Jan. 7, 2868 Mission St., 6:30-7:30 p.m. Alyssa Stone, 252-3209 or artsedassistant@sfgov.org.

Hospitality House Holiday Art Sale, through Jan. 29, 146 Leavenworth, Mon., Wed., Fri. 1-6 p.m.; Tue., Thu. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.. Info: 749-2133.

COMMUNITY: REGULAR SCHEDULE HOUSING

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

Tenant Associations Coalition of San Francisco, 1st Wednesday of the month, noon, 201 Turk St., 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 St., 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 St., 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 III-S.F., 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Family Service Agency, 1010 Gough St., 5th Fl. Call: 905-6264. Family member group, open to the public.

SAFETY

Neighborhood Emergency Response Team Training (NERT). Central city residents can take the S.F. Fire Department's free disaster preparedness and response training at neighborhood locations. See www.sfgov.org/sffdert, 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.

Tenderloin Police Station Community Meeting, last Tuesday of the month, 6 p.m., police station Community Room, 301 Eddy St. 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 St. Contact Michael Nulty, 820-1560 or 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. Information: 339-VOTE (8683) or centralcitydemocrats@yahoo.com.

Central Market Community Benefit District, board meets 2nd Tuesday of the month, Hotel Whitcomb, 1231 Market St., 3 p.m. Information: 882-3088, <http://central-market.org>.

Community Leadership Alliance. Monthly meetings and informational forums, Tenderloin Police Station community room. David Villa-Lobos, admin@communityleadershipalliance.net.

Friends of Boeddeker Park, 2nd Thursday of the month, 3:30 p.m., Boeddeker Rec Center, 240 Eddy St. 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/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.

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

Tenderloin Futures Collaborative, 2nd Wednesday of the month, 10 a.m., Tenderloin Police Station community room, 301 Eddy St. 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 of the month, 9 a.m.-noon, Universal Unitarian Church, 1187 Franklin St. Monthly programs, 965 Mission St. #700: Senior Housing Action Committee, third Wednesday, 1:30. Call for info on health program and Senior U: 546-1333 and www.sfshp.org.

Flu Season Is Here

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2. **Practice** healthy habits. Eat nutritious food, rest, and drink lots of water.
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