Save the Date! TNDC Annual Birthday Dinner
May 12, 2009

In this time of economic hardship for so many in our country, TNDC knows that a hearty Christmas meal is not always a reality for those who struggle in poverty. In San Francisco alone, there were almost 150,000 people considered at risk of going hungry this holiday season – at a time when limited incomes barely stretch to cover basic necessities, let alone the treats and gifts that make the holidays such a joy.

“After decades of being primarily described by the media as ‘seedy,’ The Uptown Tenderloin Historic District finally gives the community defined boundaries and a positive identity,” reported Randy Shaw in BeyondChron News last July, after a unanimous vote by the State Historical Resources Commission to nominate the historical Tenderloin neighborhood for federal historic district status.

“The historical district’s creation also means that the dream of maintaining the Tenderloin as a rare urban neighborhood combining affordable housing, primarily low-income residents and high quality of life is a large step closer to reality.

The Tenderloin is undergoing a facelift, as historians and neighborhood advocates are directing the City’s attention to this area’s rich cultural and architectural history. Now known by its historically accurate name of “Uptown Tenderloin District,” the new historic district runs from McAllister on the south to Mason on the east, Geary to the north and just east of Polk Street as its western border.

“There is a rich history here, and this neighborhood is filled with gems,” said TNDC Executive Director Don Falk, who has been working in the Tenderloin for 15 years. “This neighborhood has been an entertainment district dating back at least to the 1880s. And it has historically been a gateway community, not only for San Francisco but also the entire country.” The emigration of Southeast Asian refugees in 1975, following the end of the Vietnam War, is only one of the latest in the waves of immigrants to enter the US through the Tenderloin. This history has made it one of the densest and most diverse communities in the country.

TNDC Combats Hunger this Holiday Season

In this time of economic hardship for so many in our country, TNDC knows that a hearty Christmas meal is not always a reality for those who struggle in poverty. In San Francisco alone, there were almost 150,000 people considered at risk of going hungry this holiday season – at a time when limited incomes barely stretch to cover basic necessities, let alone the treats and gifts that make the holidays such a joy.

“Our pantries have reported a 15% increase in the number of patrons in the last year,” said Marguerite Nowak of the San Francisco Food Bank, who partners with TNDC to provide fresh produce and pantry staples for our limited income residents. “Even if families are lucky enough to still earn what they used to, food prices have skyrocketed. They might still have $10 for food, but $10 doesn’t go nearly as far now.”

To ensure all of our tenants enjoyed a happy and healthy holiday season, TNDC’s employees banded together to make sure that – first and foremost – none of our tenants had to choose between putting food on their tables and paying their heating bills this season. Kicked off with a company-wide Cereal Drive in October, TNDC employees along with generous assistance from CB2, the Ladies of the San Francisco Consular Corps and many private donations, were able to provide 500 boxes of nutritious cereal and nearly 1,000 pounds of canned goods to distribute during the holidays.

“With the rising costs of food, I have noticed that it has become more difficult for tenants to purchase food bags to help supplement meager incomes during the holidays. TNDC volunteers stuff food bags to help supplement meager incomes during the holidays.
Whither The Tenderloin?

What will be the lasting impact of today’s work?

The designation of the Tenderloin by the National Register of Historic Places as an historic district—the Uptown Tenderloin—brings to mind the question of how today’s work of groups like TNDC will look impact future generations.

TNDC, like many other groups working in the Tenderloin, acts as a safety net for many, providing an affordable place to live, access to services, food and other necessities of daily life, without which people’s very lives might be in peril.

But more than a safety net, we are changing the neighborhood’s physical landscape, and the ramifications of today’s work will stand for 100 years. Just as the decisions made in the two decades following the Great Earthquake more than 100 years ago are evident today, so will the choices affect the physical nature of the Tenderloin of 22nd century. It’s hard to imagine, but it’s true.

Beyond the buildings themselves, though, who owns and controls property will shape the nature of the Tenderloin of the future. When TNDC was founded in 1981, fighting gentrification was residents’ primary concern. The threat to a disappearing stock of residential hotels had been met with the SRO Hotel Conversion Ordinance in the 1970’s, and in 1979 the City’s renter’s achieved a measure of protection through the adoption of rent control. In 1984 residents succeeded in down-zoning the Tenderloin, restricting commercial development to the first floor and limiting building heights to 130 feet.

Thirty years later, we can declare victory: 50% or more of the Tenderloin is owned or controlled by nonprofit and public entities, and the threat that the neighborhood will transform into an exclusively middle class enclave is much diminished. Quality of life, not gentrification, is today’s primary issue.

What will be the lasting impact of today’s work? Thousands of people are living a better life, access to services, food and other necessities of daily life, without which people’s very lives might be in peril.

Thank you for everything you do to improve the Tenderloin and the lives of the people who live here.

Sincerely,

Donna S. Falk
Executive Director

Resident Spotlight: Rodda Pacheco

Rodda Pacheco is a testament to TNDC’s belief that a secure home is the foundation on which people stabilize their lives. Having fought her way through countless odds, Rodda now lives comfortably with her son Curtis in TNDC’s Curran House, where she is able to provide what she wants most for her son: a stable, healthy life.

But a home has not always been guaranteed for this small family. The first years of Curtis’ life were spent moving from shelter to shelter as he and his loving mother struggled together through periods of being homeless. “Being on the streets with my baby is something I never want to live through again,” she said.

A Hard Road

Heart-wrenching circumstances led Rodda struggling to stabilize herself and her life when her son Curtis arrived. When she was only seven her mother married a man who began sexually molesting her. The abuse—perpetuated at one time by a family friend as well—continued for ten years when, at eighteen, Rodda was raped by her stepfather. She decided she had no choice but to flee her abusive home.

Rodda stayed on friends’ couches, lived in car, moved back and forth between cities—and, to escape the pain she was in, fell victim to drugs and alcohol. As a result, Rodda found herself homeless and resorted to things she is not proud of to get drugs.

Today Rodda has been sober for almost nine years. She credits her transformation to the arrival of her son Curtis. “He turned my life around,” she said, knowing she has to keep it together to be there for him. “I just decided one day that I needed to quit, and I’ve done it on my own without rehab.”

Rodda has made peace with her past. “My advice is that you have to forgive the people who hurt you and move on. It took me years, but I have forgiven them.”

“We’ve come a long way in one month,” she said. Rodda is currently applying for in-home support services jobs, as she is passionate about caring for seniors and working with elderly people.

Shatae has glowing remarks about how hard Rodda works. “She’s become so strong.” Together they are working on both the immediate needs of her family and also to create a longer life plan. “It’s a client-empowerment model,” she said. “And Rodda is in charge.”

“We know, as she always has, that Rodda will overcome this obstacle... not only for herself but also for the son she loves so much. As Rodda likes to say, ‘Only the strong survive.’

“Being homeless with my baby is something I never want to live through again.”

Finding TNDC

Rodda and her son were referred to TNDC by a case manager at Compass Community Services, a connecting point for housing and employment. After being on the waiting list for TNDC’s Franciscan Towers for 6 months, they moved into a SRO studio together. Grateful to have a roof over their heads, Rodda knew living in one room with an active, growing boy was not an ideal long-term solution.

In March 26, 2008, Rodda and Curtis were transferred to a large apartment in TNDC’s Curran House. “I walked in and I cried,” Rodda said. “It was so nice, so comfortable.” Curtis, now seven years old, is able to have his own room.

A Healthy Environment for Her Son

As a loving mother, Rodda knows her son needs special help to cope with the stress of where they’ve been. She has found him regular sessions of child therapy and fought to get him into a different school where there are more support services for special needs.

After school, Curtis attends TNDC’s Tenderloin After School Program, where he seemsingly boundless energy is directed toward healthy outlets and activities. He likes computers, reading, sports, the snacks, and making friends there. Rodda herself has spent a lot of time at TASP helping to manage Curtis and bonding with other parents.

It is clear how close the relationship between Rodda and Curtis is. “His face lights up when she comes to TASP and when they are together,” said TNDC employee Julie Delaney. “It’s like they are in their own bubble together.”

TNDC’s Social Work Services

Rodda is still struggling to maintain the stable environment she has worked so hard for. After a recent lay-off, Rodda has been working closely with TNDC Social Worker Shatae Jones to address her unemployment.
TASP Kids Go BeatCrazy!

The coordinators of TNDC’s Tenderloin After-School Program work hard to create a stable, healthy environment in which children growing up on the rough streets of the Tenderloin can learn and grow. Each day after school, TASP's doors are open to any neighborhood kid who needs a safe place to spend the hours before dinner—with programs that include a balanced schedule of homework and tutoring, fun activities, and workshops to explore new ideas and experiences.

But up until last fall, TASP had not yet had a music program.

“An education in the arts for young people in our communities has life-long significance and positive effects,” said David Williamson, a Bay Area music teacher who, along with Ranjan Dey of local restaurant New Delhi and Robin Sukhadia of global music education effort Project Ahimsa, developed an exciting new program for TASP BeatCrazy, a 7-part series of workshops scheduled once a month from November 2008 through May 2009, that will introduce TASP children to music and positive effects,” said David Williamson, a Bay Area music teacher who, along with Ranjan Dey of local restaurant New Delhi and Robin Sukhadia of global music education effort Project Ahimsa, developed an exciting new program for TASP BeatCrazy, a 7-part series of workshops scheduled once a month from November 2008 through May 2009, that will introduce TASP children to music. “An education in the arts for young people in our communities has life-long significance and positive effects,” said David Williamson, a Bay Area music teacher who, along with Ranjan Dey of local restaurant New Delhi and Robin Sukhadia of global music education effort Project Ahimsa, developed an exciting new program for TASP BeatCrazy, a 7-part series of workshops scheduled once a month from November 2008 through May 2009, that will introduce TASP children to music and positive effects,” said David Williamson, a Bay Area music teacher who, along with Ranjan Dey of local restaurant New Delhi and Robin Sukhadia of global music education effort Project Ahimsa, developed an exciting new program for TASP BeatCrazy, a 7-part series of workshops scheduled once a month from November 2008 through May 2009, that will introduce TASP children to music and positive effects,” said David Williamson, a Bay Area music teacher who, along with Ranjan Dey of local restaurant New Delhi and Robin Sukhadia of global music education effort Project Ahimsa, developed an exciting new program for TASP BeatCrazy, a 7-part series of workshops scheduled once a month from November 2008 through May 2009, that will introduce TASP children to music and positive effects.”

Each BeatCrazy workshop includes a performance by a visiting musician, information on the type of music and instruments played, and a piece of music that participants will learn and perform together at the end of the workshop. The children's musical performance will be recorded at the end of each session for a BeatCrazy compilation that will be the culminating work for the series. Funded by Project Ahimsa and the TRA Fund, the BeatCrazy workshops will include tabla and various other percussion instruments from India, Taiko from Japan, street percussion from Oakland, Quinlala bamboo percussion from the streets of Venezuela, Samba (batucada) from Brazil, Middle Eastern Turkish and Afghanistan music, and West Africa music from Ghana—with accompanying dance moves.

TASP participant Curtis reported that at last month’s BeatCrazy workshop “the teachers were good and smart” and that he “really liked the rhythms we did on the drums.”

Seven year old Paul said that he saw the African drums on the Nature Channel and “they made me want to play them at TASP. I really liked making noise with the drums!”

Dyllan, age five, said “The drums were really loud and I liked it. The teacher helped me learn.”

While the kids are having fun, the BeatCrazy coordinators have a twinkle in their eye because they know these children are learning so much more than rhythm. They are learning to love having a musical instrument in their hands.

“Music studies have shown that students who enjoy a committed and creative relationship with a musical instrument are more able to extend that relationship to other external stimuli,” David said. “Like an English or math assignment.”

Disaster Preparedness Is Complicated, Costly, and Crucial

As a property owner and manager of 25 buildings, an employer of nearly 250 people, and as a provider of tenant services to over 2,500 residents, TNDC will have a lot to handle in the event of a major disaster such as an earthquake.

That’s why a small group of passionate and concerned staff have taken the initiative to identify and assess major issues that will affect the organization’s immediate response to an emergency.

The Emergency Preparedness Committee (EPC) has established relationships with the Fritz Institute, San Francisco Community Agencies Responding to Disaster (SF CARD), Bay Area Prep, and other community-based organizations in the area to draw on existing preparedness resources. The EPC has developed and implemented an Emergency Response Plan and has begun incorporating Neighborhood Emergency Response Trainings (NERT), High Rise Director Certifications, Red Cross trainings, Critical Stress Management, and a Hazardous Material Certification into its disaster preparedness efforts.

Over 80% of TNDC’s tenants are extremely low-income. Approximately 45% of tenants are seniors, and nearly 30% are mobility impaired. Many have debilitating mental or physical health conditions. Some are culturally or socially isolated, or do not speak English. On any given day, there are 55 children at TNDC’s Tenderloin After-School Program, and there are a number of children living in our buildings. In a regular day, this demographic can be a complicated group to protect. In a disaster, it could be catastrophic.

Last January, 32 staff members, including Building Managers, Maintenance Leads, Social Workers, and some EPC members became NERT-certified, meaning they learned standard response skills to cope with emergencies of all kinds. In 2008, almost 100 TNDC staff participated in one or both of two earthquake table-top exercises. The second, larger exercise was evaluated by SF CARD and the Fritz Institute.

TNDC is progressing toward making the Tenderloin a community of preparedness, and has accepted a leadership role as a Response Captain for the Tenderloin neighborhood. Nevertheless, emergency preparedness is complicated, time-consuming, and can be costly. As such, the EPC continuously seeks funding, supplies, and collaboration opportunities. In the end, the payoff of these efforts should be high. When a disaster does strike, more staff and residents will have the skills to handle the event, limiting hazards to life, safety, and property in the Tenderloin.
Donor Spotlight: Macy’s and Barclay’s Global Investors

“Our goal at TASP at is to help our participants experience all the joys of life, including the thrill of holidays and presents,” said Laura Choe, Program Manager of TNDC’s Tenderloin After-School Program (TASP). The holidays can be a stressful time for many low-income families, even more so during the current economic instability. “For many families of TASP children, disposable income is very tight and when a child gets excited about the holidays thinking of new toys and gifts, this can create additional stress for a parent.”

For nearly a decade, Macy's and Barclay’s Global Investors have lent their support to TASP to help alleviate the financial burden of the holidays. Responding to Christmas “Wish Lists” created by the kids, employees provide generous donations of new clothing, games, books, music, toys, and gift cards to over 100 participants in the after school program. “Their employees take time out of their own schedules to shop, purchase, and wrap gifts that TASP participants have requested,” said Laura. These efforts help alleviate some of the financial burden on parents to buy lots of expensive gifts for the kids, and they simultaneously help alleviate some pressure on the TASP budget to provide special holiday activities and gifts to participants. “Our combined efforts allow us to give out huge gift bags to the children,” said Laura. “It’s truly a sight to see…they’re stuffed full of brand new, personalized gifts that we hope make the kids feel really special.”

And because a holiday meal sometimes exceeds the budgets of low-income families, Barclay’s Global Investors also sponsors two specialty catered dinners for the families of TASP children: one in November for Thanksgiving and one in December to celebrate the holidays. Each year their employees volunteer to help set up, serve food and drinks, assist the younger kids to their seats, and sometimes play games or do art activities with TASP participants at these special events.

“Understanding that times are financially tough for everyone, it’s not difficult to grasp the significance of Macy’s and Barclay Global Investor’s continued support,” said Laura. “Their efforts represent the true spirit of the holiday season. We are deeply grateful.”

“Tenderloin Pride can’t turn front

and today some 20 languages can be heard on the Tenderloin’s streets.

The area also has a rich architectural history. All buildings in the area were destroyed in the fire following the Great Earthquake in 1906, and largely rebuilt in the following 20 years using fire-resistant masonry rather than wood. The architectural style prevalent in the neighborhood is a utilitarian residential unit, usually hotels or single room occupancy (SRO) units built to house a growing working class adjacent to San Francisco’s downtown, with ornate facades that reflect the Greek and Roman Classical Revival of the early 20th century. This classical detail gives the neighborhood its distinct historical charm.

To celebrate its rich history, a Tenderloin History Museum—for which a thirty-year lease has already been signed—is planned for the corner of Eddy and Leavenworth under the historic, 100-year old Cadillac Hotel. The SF office of the international architectural firm Perkins & Will has agreed to donate design services for the museum, ensuring that its façade will mirror the ornate architecture that brings character to the area.

Bringing tourists to the Tenderloin will not only mean more foot traffic to create safer streets, but it will also bring a greater share of the city’s billion-dollar tourist trade, boosting business in the area. For business owners this also means tax credits for renovations of historic properties, encouraging owners and landlords of long neglected buildings to begin structural and safety upgrades. A substantial tax credit provided under the Mills Act will encourage architectural renovation, which will have a positive effect on the preservation of the neighborhood’s character and the safety and security of its residents.

“Most importantly, the historic district will highlight the richness of the neighborhood’s history and become a source of pride for Tenderloin residents,” said Don Falk. “Those who live here know not only of the crime and drugs, but also of the neighborhood’s positive aspects —like the 100-year old buildings that populate it—and this further validates its value.”

Those who know of the Tenderloin’s charms are excited about the new status the historical district creates for this long troubled community. “It’s a really significant moment in the Tenderloin’s history,” Don said. “Something to celebrate and to build on.”

TNDC Combates Hunger can’t turn front

healthy and nutritious food,” said Delene Rankin, TNDC Social Work Unit Manager. “Food Security was a big concern for many of TNDC’s tenants during the holiday season.”

In an effort to assist during this difficult time, TNDC staff distributed more than 800 Food Bags in November and December filled with chicken, stuffing, beans and rice, crackers, soup, and many other nutritious items. At two Annual Food Bag Days, TNDC employees from the social work unit, property management, and the after school program pooled their efforts to stuff the hundreds of bags with items to supplement meager incomes.

TNDC also organized decorating parties and 30 sit-down Holiday Dinners to ensure all tenants were able to enjoy a festive and welcoming holiday meal. The dinners were catered and offered a variety of food items that were both traditional and cultural to our tenants: one in November for Thanksgiving and one in December to celebrate the holidays. Each year their employees volunteer to help set up, serve food and drinks, assist the younger kids to their seats, and sometimes play games or do art activities with TASP participants at these special events.

TNDC will continue to be concerned about food insecurity as our nation moves deeper into the economic crisis. “We’ve noticed a marked increase in people asking for food assistance in the last few months,” said Marguerite Nowak. Food donations to the food bank from the retail food industry have dropped about 20% in the past year. “San Francisco is very generous…but we’re definitely worried about the availability of food in 2009.”

TNDC is working hard to ensure our residents make it through these tough times with food on their tables.

“I appreciate TNDC giving us food bags because it shows how much they care about the people who stay here,” said Janet Chevalier of the Curran House. “Sometimes you don’t feel comfortable coming to ask for help, but my social worker always stops by and keeps me up to speed about what’s going on.

“When she told me I was getting a food bag, I was so happy because she didn’t know how much I needed it.”