TNDC Named One of America’s Top 50 Affordable Housing Developers

This year, TNDC was recognized by Affordable Housing Finance Magazine as #29 of America’s Top 50 Affordable Housing Developers—with good reason. In the last few months TNDC’s busy Housing Development Department has celebrated the Grand Openings of two new developments that will provide more than 190 new homes for formerly homeless and low-income people in this community.

990 Polk Street

A beautiful new building at 990 Polk Street provides 110 affordable homes for formerly homeless and low-income seniors in the Tenderloin neighborhood. This award-winning design was developed in partnership with Citizens Housing Corporation and represents an innovative approach to address homelessness by combining services-rich supportive housing units within a larger low-income population.

50 of 990 Polk Street’s 110 affordable units are set aside for formerly homeless seniors. “Diversity in the building does not just extend to race and gender, but encompasses background too—we are housing people who have never had that experience. A diverse population is healthy for everyone,” said Don Falk, TNDC’s Executive Director.

With ground floor retail space to help revitalize the neighborhood and offices for on-site resident support service providers, the building also includes a large solarium, a community room with a kitchen, a computer center, and ample outdoor patio and community garden space, making it a pleasant and bright home for its resident community.

“I love how much natural light the building gets,” said Don, commenting on the efficient use of its corner lot positioning and the creative layout of the units that captures sunlight from many different angles. “And the terraced roof affords two large common areas for the 990 Polk community to enjoy the outdoors. It’s a very livable space.”

“Before construction, the site was very blighted—it was an unused dry cleaner and parking lot, with a pay phone that was frequented by drug dealers. Now look at the space.”

TNDC Expands Activities Program for Seniors

Program for Seniors

TNDC Executive Director Don Falk and Community Housing Partnership Executive Director Jeff Kostalek cut the ribbon at Arnett Watson Apartments’ Grand Opening Ceremony in June.

TNDC’s Paul Sussman Awarded CFO of the Year

Congratulations to Paul Sussman, TNDC’s Chief Financial Officer, who has been named CFO of the Year! Paul received this honor at the fourth annual Bay Area CFO of the Year Awards, hosted by Business Times and Larkin Street Youth Services.

The award recognizes individuals who play a critical role in the success of their organizations and, in the case of the Community Service category, have also worked to improve the quality of life for people in our community. TNDC is truly lucky to have such capable fiscal leadership on board!

TNDC One of America’s Top 50

CFO of the Year

Kids Run the Show at TASP

TNDC Expands Activities Program for Seniors
Can we sustain our mission in the long run?

The budget crisis has TNDC facing difficult choices.

Eighteen months into the recession, and ten months after the economy began melting down, Tenderloin residents are feeling the impact—as is TNDC. We are facing unprecedented challenges and are left with difficult choices between our own long-term institutional welfare and that of the people we serve.

In recent months, those on public assistance (primarily seniors and people with disabilities) have seen their benefits cut, not once or twice but three different times. And they are unlikely to see any increases next year. Given California’s budget situation, it’s not unreasonable to think that all of us must make sacrifices, but when an individual is living on a monthly income of $970—in San Francisco—a 10% cut requires profound choices, for example between rent and food or a visit to the doctor.

And it’s going to get worse. The staggering deficit in the City and County of San Francisco’s budget is leading to widespread cuts in community-based organizations’ budgets, resulting in a corresponding reduction in services. That means Tenderloin residents’ out-of-pocket costs will rise, even as their incomes decline. And that quality of life, already marginal, will deteriorate as they lose access to “optional” services like dental, vision, hearing and mental health services.

Like most other nonprofits, TNDC faces its own financial challenges due to reduced donations and, in our case, the collapse of the affordable housing market from which we earn development fees. As a result, we are facing significant reductions in revenue that we’re addressing by suppressing salary increases, reducing our staff head-count by attrition, and other cost-cutting measures.

Another strategy to address our financial stability, however, cuts at the core of our mission. A cut to our development pipeline—which accounts for a substantial portion of our operating budget—would result in significant decreases to our reserves, and strengthen our ability to survive and sustain our mission in the long run?

I don’t know where we will end up on this question—it will play out during the upcoming budget cycle—but we cannot avoid grappling with it, and I raise it as an example of the difficult choices that the economic decline has brought about for organizations serving low-income people.

Your support—both financial and emotional—means so much to us. Thank you for caring about the Tenderloin and TNDC.

Warm regards,

Donald S. Falk
Executive Director

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: Ken Odell

A native San Franciscan, Ken Odell has always been fascinated with urban places. “I grew up on Humphrey Bogart films like The Maltese Falcon,” he explained. In the genre of film noir, the protagonist often relies on skills of keen observation and local knowledge of the urban landscape to prevail. “Just like those movies, the Tenderloin was a dangerous and gritty place back then—that reputation endures today, even though much has changed about the neighborhood.”

“It’s a wonderful example of a complex urban environment with many dimensions. Rapid gentrification tends to overtake older neighborhoods with unaffordable new developments. We’re running out of unique places like the Tenderloin.”

He first heard about TNDC through friend and former TNDC Board Chair Sally Carlson. “Ken and I share a great deal of interest in the inner-city environment,” she said. “And a deep compassion for the struggles of new Americans in particular. TNDC plays a key role in offering the stability that families need to succeed.”

Ken served two terms on the Board of Directors, participated on Executive Committee, and created a special role as Chief Legal Officer — a position that remains today. During his tenure, Ken provided invaluable legal advice and his expertise has helped the organization navigate the sometimes arcane world of construction law—“TNDC is a nonprofit that actually accomplishes things. I’m a practical person, and believe TNDC is a great model because it is run as a business. That appeals to me.”

A frequent presence in the community, Ken has remained active as a donor, volunteer, and ally of TNDC for more than a decade. He has acquired a deep understanding of the Tenderloin and can be seen at building openings, local eateries, theatre performances, and appreciating the vibrant cultural happenings and everyday street life in the Tenderloin.

Most recently, he volunteers twice a month for TNDC by shopping in bulk at San Francisco Food Bank’s warehouse. “It’s three to four hours of hands-on physical work that keeps me in shape,” he reported. According to Social Work Unit Manager Delene Rankin, “This special program allows TNDC to secure additional packaged groceries and fresh produce for residents in 11 buildings, at deep discounts. Having a range of food choices allows TNDC to meet the varied nutritional needs and cultural preferences of the client communities we serve.”

Our deep appreciation goes to Ken Odell for actively bringing his skills to bear on behalf of TNDC’s mission and future.

Support TNDC for the Long Term!

Help us ensure that affordable housing is available for low-income San Franciscans for years to come by including us in your estate plans or through a bequest, charitable trust, or insurance annuity. For more information, please contact Jane Hatch, Development Director, at (415) 358-3946 or jhatch@tndc.org.
At TASP’s Cultural Festivals, Kids Put on the Show

Growing up in one of the densest and most diverse urban centers in the nation, it's crucial for children in the Tenderloin to understand and appreciate the multitude of cultures and backgrounds that comprise this vibrant neighborhood. TNDC’s Tenderloin After-School Program (TASP) encourages cultural awareness every day through art projects and field trips that foster exploration and celebration of diversity. But perhaps the most renowned of TASP’s cultural awareness efforts are their three annual cultural festivals—a “M unidentified

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TND resident Queen Kurbally’s journey to San Francisco and the Tenderloin neighborhood started in 2002 when she left her home country of Gambia, Africa. There, she was the owner of a factory that made ornate, dyed fabric called batik and a school that produced some of the most attractive garments in Gambia. Queen lived with her large family including seven children, who helped with domestic duties while she ran the factory. Life flourished for Queen until painful circumstances she prefers not to share forced her to leave her family and business to come to America.

When she arrived in the Bay Area, Queen stayed with a close friend she considered a family member. Unfortunately her friend suffered from alcoholism and became severely depressed. One morning her friend told her to leave… and just like that, Queen was homeless and had nowhere to go.

She was scared and didn’t have many options. “I was taking a Business Administration class at the Women’s Initiative and the teacher took me to Glide, but they didn’t have any rooms, so I went to a shelter called Next Door,” she explained. From there, Queen was directed to the Tom Waddell Clinic, where a social worker finally told her about TNDC and available rooms at the West Hotel.

At first Queen was concerned about living in the Tenderloin because of the violence she had heard about in the area. These concerns slowly dissipated as she became accustomed to her new surroundings. “The West is a clean, safe place and the staff is very respectful,” she said. “Having the key in my hand was so exciting!” Having a place to call her home is very important to her. She has now lived at the West Hotel for four years and has no plans to leave anytime soon.

Now that Queen is a Tenderloin resident, she has become very involved with community issues that affect those who live here. She has worked with TNDC Community Organizer Steve Woo on projects such as the 2008 Get Out the Vote Campaign and helped to gather signatures to petition for a Tenderloin grocery store that will provide healthy food options to residents.

“When people get involved in their community, it lifts their spirits up and they don’t see themselves as poor,” she said. “When we are organized as residents we feel that we have a voice and the city will listen.”

TNDC Community Organizer Steve Woo has seen first-hand the influence Queen has with people in the neighborhood. “Working with Queen is great because she commands the respect of the tenants and you can tell they are inspired by her,” said Steve. Queen is eager to begin her next journey and has a desire to try fundraising so she can raise money for service providers within the Tenderloin. She also hopes to one day teach Batik-making again.

RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT: Queen Kurbally

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To start, we surveyed the community to determine which three issues most affect the neighborhood and most need to be focused on,” said Steve Woo, TNDC’s Community Organizer. The survey results showed that residents are most concerned about the limited availability of affordable housing, community safety, and the scarcity of healthy, affordable food in the area.

“We then took these results and held a Tenant Summit to give our residents a chance to give us feedback in more detail,” Steve explained. “We asked them: ‘What actions would you like to see around this issue?’ And ‘What would it take you to get involved?’” Three breakout groups offered a chance for intense discussion and brainstorming about how each issue should be approached.

More than seventy people participated. “We knocked on hundreds of doors to outreach,” Steve said. “Not just employees – dozens of tenant volunteers helped get their neighbors involved. They understood the meaning of the summit and the importance of grassroots involvement in making positive change.”

Food Justice
Discussions on the lack of affordable, healthy food choices in the Tenderloin neighborhood revealed that our residents desire information about nutrition and about economical cooking. “Community Organizing staff are hoping to start a peer education program to facilitate more cooking in our Single Resident Occupancy units, or units that share a common kitchen area,” said Steve. Concerns were also raised about the lack of a grocery store and healthy food options in a neighborhood with mostly liquor and convenience stores.

“We wouldn’t be working so hard to bring a grocery to the neighborhood if we hadn’t heard feedback from residents that one is desperately needed,” said Don.

Affordable Housing Advocacy
Tenants also expressed concern about the lack of affordable housing in San Francisco. “While many knew housing is getting more expensive, we realized most residents don’t understand the full context in which housing prices are rising,” said Steve. “It is a symptom of a broken system that makes it difficult for people of color and people with disabilities to overcome poverty.”

The Community Organizing Department attends to generate support among tenants in actions that involve advocating for funding and support for affordable housing. “We want to show residents alternative, effective methods to help address the root cause of the housing crisis.”

Grassroots Community Safety
The final breakout discussion group, facilitated by Gina Hilliard, a TNDC Board Member, focused on grassroots community safety, or safety that is generated by the community for the community. Word was spread about the neighborhood’s Safe Haven Campaign, in which safety areas are set up by local businesses and organizations for people who feel unsafe on the streets.

“What struck me most was no matter how differing the opinions about safety were, each tenant agreed that feeling safe is a right, not a privilege, and any improvement to safety conditions in the neighborhood will require a community-based effort,” said Dona.

Sustainable, lasting change can only be birthed in the community. City workers, law enforcement, and service providers may come and go, but the community will remain to implement and sustain lasting change by working together.”

Last winter, in response to growing demand for these services, TNDC welcomed two new Activities Coordinators to the team – Helena and Mark. These two are devoted and love for working with seniors has helped to usher in a new, expanded program to engage our residents.

“TNDOnot have the capacity to extend to Turk/Eddy Preservation, two HUD buildings that house seniors and the disabled in the heart of the Tenderloin neighborhood. “A woman who lives in Turk and Eddy used to stay in her home and never come out,” said Mark. “So we were invited to the Mother’s Day Celebration she felt a little overwhelmed. But she attended and even participated in the arts and crafts. It was really touching to see her open up.”

TNDC Activities Program includes field trips to destinations like the California Academy of Sciences, the Museum of the African Diaspora, and SF Giants games, knitting, cooking, and Tai Chi classes, and even inter-generational projects that connect the seniors with kids from TNDC’s Tenderloin After-School Program, such as last May’s celebration of Filipino culture and creation of “The Pahin,” a traditional Filipino party game in which a hula hoop is hung from the ceiling with favors and candy tied to it. Seniors had great time pulling the Pahin up and down on a string to tease the children as they reached for kibobs. “Residents really enjoy preparing these projects for the little children and have fun watching them do them,” said TNDC Social Worker Betty Duran, who organizes many of these activities at Alexander Residence, a building for senior and disabled occupants in which she serves.

“My favorites are the musical events,” said Mark. Bread and Roses, a local organization dedicated to providing free, live music performances for people who live in institutions or are otherwise isolated from society, often holds performances in TNDC’s buildings. “Those events are the most successful at bringing people together – not only those who live in the building but residents from other buildings and the neighborhood as well.”

And there is no dividing line as for language barriers goes,” said Helena. One of the major hurdles TNDC’s Activities Coordinators faceis the dividing line between cultural groups in TNDC buildings. “We’re really trying to encourage residents to venture beyond their comfort zones and get to know neighbors who are different from them.”

Helena, Mark, and Teresa keep themselves busy gauging the interests of residents and offering activities that will enrich their lives and their community. Resident surveys help highlight areas they might overlook and weekly coffee hours bring residents out to share their opinions on what new activities would be most welcome.

“We’ve recently learned that a short story writing class is desired,” said Mark, who is currently looking for a volunteer to teach the seniors to write memoirs and short stories about their lives.

“We’re always looking for volunteers to share their skills and reach a class,” said Helena. If you are interested in learning more, contact Jane Hatch at (415) 358-3946.
TNDC Expands Its Activities Program for Seniors

TNDC seeks not just to provide affordable housing for Tenderloin senior citizens who wish to remain in the neighborhood that has been their home, but also to provide housing that will enable them to maintain healthy, happy lives and to age with dignity. A key part of this mission includes fostering a sense of community in TNDC buildings—developing neighbor relations and heightening the interpersonal communication skills that can detenate with age and infirmity.

TNDC’s Community Organizing Department intends to venture outside their rooms and actively participate in the community of their building and the neighborhood. “I am happy to see residents feel energized during the activities and know they are being loved and cared for by TNDC,” said Teresa Suen, who has been an Activities Coordinator at TNDC for over seven years.

Last winter, in response to growing demand for these services, TNDC welcomed two new Activities Coordinators to the team – Helena and Mark. Their enthusiasm and love for working with seniors has helped to usher in a new, expanded program to engage our residents.

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“From Tai Chi to knitting and inter-generational projects, we’re just starting to get a sense of what people want,” said Elena. “It’s very exciting.”

www.tndc.org 4 July 2009

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At TASP’s Cultural Festivals, Kids Put on the Show

Growing up in one of the densest and most diverse urban centers in the nation, it’s crucial for children in the Tenderloin to understand and appreciate the multitude of cultures and backgrounds that comprise this vibrant neighborhood. TNDC's Tenderloin After-School Program (TASP) encourages cultural awareness every day through art projects and field trips that foster exploration and celebration of diversity. But perhaps the most renowned of TASP’s cultural awareness efforts are their three annual cultural festivals—a “Mini” African American Festival, a Cinco de Mayo Festival, and a Halloween haunted house celebrating American culture.

"Our goal is to make these complicated concepts accessible for kids from ages five to eightes,” said Jennifer Hom, TASP Program Coordinator. Through the festivals’ performances, games, and art and cooking projects that both entertain and inform, children learn important lessons about cultural history and diversity.

“During the Cinco Mayo African American Festival last February, I was amazed to find out that some of our kids didn’t even know what segregation is... even fifteen year olds who have been in school for years,” said Jennifer Hom, TASP Program Coordinator. Throughout the festivals’ performances, games, and art and cooking projects that both entertain and inform, children learn important lessons about cultural history and diversity.

But as is usually the case at TASP, there are multiple layers of learning involved in every fan activity. By allowing the kids to put on the show, the coordinators of TASP use this opportunity not only to foster cross-cultural exploration but also as a youth leadership development activity. Teens apply for and are assigned “jobs” on the events’ planning committee, making them responsible for coordinating the event.

“We use these activities to teach them skills that will be useful in the future, when they apply for jobs in the real world,” said Jennifer. Motivating the youth to participate, TASP offers modest stipends between $75 and $125 to those who are hired—not just like a real job. And like a real job, the kids are expected to interviewer, accept the title and responsibility of their position, and make the necessary time commitment to get the job done. “They learn the importance of being on time, a commitment to following through, and what it is like being a part of a team and being held accountable,” said Jennifer. “The younger kids in TASP see the older ones take on these leadership roles and follow their example.”

For 6-8 weeks, participating youth are required to devote their after-school hours two days a week to planning and executing the event. “The teens really excel in their ‘jobs,’” said Jennifer. “Overall they were outstanding and hard-working employees.”

As she has for the past few years, TASP teenager Angelica Lopez assumed the role of Performance Instructor for the Cinco de Mayo festival last May. Her responsibilities included choreographing and teaching dances to other TASP participants, coordinating the attire and event agenda, and tracking the attendance of her performers. “These festivals have really helped me to develop my skills as an instructor, as a creative artist, and as a responsible person,” she said. “I like the leadership kids to follow their dreams.” Angelica and her dancers received a standing ovation.

The coordinators of TASP are considering adding an International Festival to the line-up, which will incorporate multiple ethnicities and cultures into the celebrations. “Two of the children in TASP are of Indian descent,” said Jennifer. “One day they had a holiday that none of us here knew about. That’s why we need an international festival. There’s so much more for us to learn about each other.”
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Another strategy to address our financial stability, however, cuts at the core of our mission. A substantial portion of our revenue—more than $8 million—comes from our tenants, the very people who are suffering the brunt of public budget cutting. They are our core constituency, and the affordability of their rent is at the very heart of TNDC’s mission. The dilemma becomes: should we freeze or decrease rents in order to make life easier for our residents, or increase them to preserve our full array of services, avoid drawing down TNDC’s reserves, and strengthen our ability to survive and sustain our mission in the long run?

I don’t know where we will end up on this question—it will play out during the upcoming budget cycle—but we cannot avoid grappling with it, and I raise it as an example of the difficult choices that the economic decline has brought about for organizations serving low-income people who are suffering the brunt of public budget cutting. They are our core constituency, and the affordability of their rent is at the very heart of TNDC’s mission. The dilemma becomes: should we freeze or decrease rents in order to make life easier for our residents, or increase them to preserve our full array of services, avoid drawing down TNDC’s reserves, and strengthen our ability to survive and sustain our mission in the long run?

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CFO of the Year
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TNDC Expands Activities Program for Seniors

With ground floor retail space to help revitalize the neighborhood and offices for on-site resident support service providers, the building also includes a large solarium, a community room with a kitchen, a computer center, and ample outdoor patio and community garden space, making it a pleasant and bright home for its resident community.

“I love how much natural light the building gets,” said Don, commenting on the efficient use of its corner lot positioning and the creative layout of the units that captures sunlight from many different angles. “And the terraced roof affords two large common areas for the 990 Polk community to enjoy the outdoors. It’s a very livable space.”

“Before construction, the site was very blighted—it was an unused dry cleaner and parking lot, with a pay phone that was frequented by drug dealers. Now look at the space.”

TNDC Executive Director Don Falk and Community Housing Partnership Executive Director Jeff Kudlinsky cut the ribbon at Arnett Watson Apartments Grand Opening Ceremony in June.

TNDC’s Paul Sussman Awarded CFO of the Year

Congratulations to Paul Sussman, TNDC’s Chief Financial Officer, who has been named a CFO of the Year! Paul received this honor at the fourth annual Bay Area CFO of the Year Awards, hosted by Business Times and Larkin Street Youth Services.

The award recognizes individuals who play a critical role in the success of their organizations and, in the case of the Community Service category, have also worked to improve the quality of life for people in our community. TNDC is truly lucky to have such capable fiscal leadership on board!

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