TNDC Makes College a Viable Option

The financial costs associated with college or vocational programs can be a major barrier to low-income communities. It often prohibits talented individuals from realizing educational and vocational goals. To encourage youth from TNDC’s After-School Program (TASP) to reach their potential, TNDC is proudly introducing its new Educational Scholarship Program.

A vision a few years ago, the program became reality this Fall when two donors—heartened by TNDC’s work with youth—provided the needed funding. “We are so grateful for this gift,” says Laura Choe, TASP Program Manager. “It’s a dream come true. We see it as a major addition to the support we offer for post-secondary educational pursuits.” Grants provided to students will help pay for school fees, tuition, room and board, books, and school supplies. Among the first recipients are four former TASP participants who are now in college and a student who will begin his first semester in January.

TNDC’s Pool Toss a Crowd Pleaser

San Francisco’s bravest local celebrities endured bad hair and soaked outfits at TNDC’s 14th Annual Celebrity Pool Toss on October 17th. The event drew 450 people to the Phoenix Hotel and raised $210,000—all benefiting Tenderloin children and their families.

With Event Chairs Gina Milano and Christina Deeb leading the charge, the night guaranteed a good time. Clift General Manager Alexandra Walterspiel was first to go into the pool and did not disappoint. Showing off a bikini, she teased the crowd to bid high. Next in line was Jack Bair, Senior Vice President of the San Francisco Giants, who gamely took the plunge with Giants mascot Lou Seal.

Victory for Prop 1C!

Proposition 1C—the Housing and Emergency Shelter Trust Fund Act of 2006—on the November 7th ballot has passed with a majority (57.5%) of the votes. Thanks for supporting this important measure, which will provide $2.85 billion to build tens of thousands of new homes for low-income Californians.
Dear Friends,

A year has passed since I began my tenure as Executive Director and TNDC is continuing to meet the critical need for safe, affordable housing and supportive services in the Tenderloin. But while we have emerged as the largest housing provider in the neighborhood, we cannot be complacent; we must adapt to its changing needs and those of TNDC.

Recent events come to mind. We welcomed as our new Chief Operating Officer Elizabeth Orlin, who was Associate Director for the Corporation for Supportive Housing. With her skills and experience, she will make big contributions to the quality and effectiveness of TNDC's programs.

We've also hired Tomiquia Moss as our full-time community organizer. Tomiquia joined us in 2004 as a social worker and will now help develop resident leadership, build collaborations, and focus on quality-of-life issues identified by the Tenderloin community.

While TNDC's primarily focus is on maintaining its 23 properties and housing nearly 2,400 low-income people with respect and dignity, we must re-double our efforts to build more affordable housing in response to the crisis we see in the Tenderloin every day. We are meeting that challenge with new developments in our pipeline, comprising nearly a thousand homes for a diverse array of people, including homeless individuals and families, seniors, the working poor, and people with mental and physical disabilities—all of whom are a reflection of the Tenderloin.

But if there is one great lesson from the past quarter-century of TNDC, it is that we do not work alone. TNDC can only fulfill its mission in collaboration with others: public and private institutions, other community-based nonprofits, faith communities, individual donors, volunteers, advocates and activists. Each has a role and a stake in our success. I hope you see your own contributions reflected in our work.

Thank you for your continued partnership, and our best to you this holiday season.

Sincerely,

Don Falk
Executive Director
Maria Guerrero’s Path to Success

**“Before moving to TNDC’s Curran House, we were basically homeless”**
—Maria Guerrero

When Maria Guerrero left the home she shared with her then-boyfriend two years ago, it was one of the best moves she ever made. She was starting a new life and leaving behind an addiction to meth. With the determination to stay “clean” and TNDC’s housing, she is now creating a new life for herself and her children.

**Beating the highly addictive drug was not easy. Maria tried quitting on her own but went back time and again. Plus, meth was easily accessible. Her ex-boyfriend was a meth user who first introduced the substance to her. “His past girlfriends did it with him,” she says. “He wanted me to do the same and it soon consumed our lives.”**

**Becoming Drug-Free**

Maria has come a long way in her recovery. She has been drug-free for two years this past November and credits her strength to her children. “I had a choice, to stay or get out of the situation for my kids.” This time, she got professional help and entered “Casa Maria,” a residential treatment program through the Latino Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services. For three months, the program helped her make changes to be healthy again.

The hardest part for Maria was the separation from her kids. Child Protective Services (CPS) placed 14-year old Jonathan in the care of his aunt while 10-year old Christopher was put into foster care. “It was hard to be positive,” says Maria. “CPS is in a hard system to go through. I had to accomplish a lot before we could all reunite.” Fortunately, Christopher was soon able to move with his mother to Harbour House, a transitional program where she spent the next four months.

Children are highly resilient but drug abuse in families usually takes a toll. Christopher, who is in the fifth grade, began getting into trouble with teachers and other school children. “He was traumatized,” Maria added. “He gets angry and acts out his frustrations.” Jonathan also began getting into trouble and was placed in juvenile hall.

**Home as Foundation**

Today, Maria is building a new life with the help of TNDC. She and her family are together, living in a three-bedroom apartment at Curran House. They moved in on the day after Christmas just last year. “At the time, we were basically homeless. We had no stability,” she says. “Curran House is a safe, beautiful place, and the staff is good.”

With a home as foundation, the family has made good progress. Christopher has returned to school and is learning to better express his feelings. Older son Jonathan is a high school freshman who works part-time in the Mayor’s Youth Employment & Education Program.

**S.F. Hotels and Nonprofits Partner Together**

Hotellers are always putting great effort and expense into frequent upgrading of rooms, public spaces, and other facilities. All of this remodeling and refurbishing typically result in huge amounts of material that ends up discarded and sent to landfills. Also destined for landfills are collateral materials—visors, cups, coffee mugs, note pads, pens, tote bags—and a stream of other items left behind after conferences and conventions.

Luckily for our over-sized landfills and depleting natural resources, the San Francisco Hotel/Nonprofit Collaborative, the collaborative has translated into major cost savings for organizations like TNDC.

**Choosing the “Right” School**

But no matter how impressive the city, personal preferences for college are generally varied. It’s a matter of where the students see themselves in the future. Fifteen-year old Perla Orozco, who attends Sacred Heart Cathedral, has been on three previous trips. In Atlanta, she enjoyed Agnes Scott, a private liberal arts college for women because of their dorm facilities. “The rooms are big, with two closets, nice bathrooms and huge hallways,” she says. Antonio Rios, who just graduated from Galileo High School, has an interest in entering the technology field. It’s no surprise that his favorite was Georgia Tech. “They have a great program,” says Antonio.

**TASP Grants**

Academics aside, the college tour allows teens to simply have fun in a new city. In Atlanta, 18-year old Sophie Ear enjoyed sights like Martin Luther King Jr’s boyhood home. “It was interesting to see what his life was like before he became a civil rights leader,” she says. The students also saw the musical “Chicago” at the Fox Theatre and a live news broadcast at CNN’s studios. They truly got a sense of Atlanta’s rich history and culture.

**S.F. Hotels and Nonprofits Partner Together**

“Before moving to TNDC, it was one of the best moves she ever made. Among the items received this year are 100 bath robes and 250 tote bags for residents. TNDC also got 200 banquet chairs in great condition for office conference rooms and the lobbies of TNDC’s residences. “It’s a win-win proposition,” says David. Businesses who participate not only help the environment but are reducing their garbage costs. Plus, the efforts foster a spirit of giving and community among all groups.

Maria with son Christopher

The kids at CNN’s studios.

TASP teens enjoying a walk by Centennial Park in Atlanta.

Choosing the “Right” School

“The added benefit is that donations are made in scale.” Among the items received this year are 100 bath robes and 250 tote bags for residents. TNDC also got 200 banquet chairs in great condition for office conference rooms and the lobbies of TNDC’s residences. “It’s a win-win proposition,” says David. Businesses who participate not only help the environment but are reducing their garbage costs. Plus, the efforts foster a spirit of giving and community among all groups.
When Cynthia Bowman was asked to be a tossee at TNDC’s 14th Annual Celebrity Pool Toss, she had to do it…but not without some hesitation. In her 30-year career as a publicist, she’s best known for working behind the scenes. Luckily, Cynthia’s soft spot for TNDC withstood her discomfort with the spotlight. She went into the pool for a cool $7,500. “That was the easiest $7,500 bucks I’ve ever made,” she laughs.

Cynthia’s history with TNDC spans a decade. She came onboard as publicist through Lynn Winslow of Winslow & Associates, an events management company that helps put on TNDC’s poolside fundraiser. Back then, the fledging event raised about $10,000 per year. Cynthia recruited the likes of former Sports Illustrated Swimsuit model Kathy Ireland, generating buzz to make the fundraiser and TNDC better known. Today, the event raises over $200,000 and draws 450 people annually.

Promoting Good Works
Prior to TNDC, Cynthia worked with arts organizations like the San Francisco Symphony, Opera, Museum of Modern Art, and American Conservatory Theater. She credits TNDC for helping make a meaningful shift in her career. “As I got to know the organization, I saw what people committed to change can do,” she says. “I saw tangible results and that reinforced what I already knew. I wanted to focus on at-risk and disenfranchised communities.”

Keeping larger clients and operating a public relations firm with generally one other person, Cynthia made it financially plausible to give discounted rates to service-oriented nonprofits. She soon added Community Housing Partnership, Glide, Project Open Hand, Walden House, and Haights-Bush Free Clinic to her client list.

The 60s in the City
Few people know that Cynthia was a hippie chick in the free-spirited days of the 60s. In 1967, at the age of 17 years, she moved to San Francisco from New York City. She lived in the Western Addition, hung out on Haight Street, and spent time with members of Jefferson Airplane. She met the group in 1974 at the headquarters of Rolling Stone magazine where she was an editorial assistant with then editor Ben Fong-Torres. In 1976, Cynthia became the band’s publicist, traveling the country with Grace Slick, Marty Balin, Paul Kantner, and the others. She and Paul later married, resulting in the birth of son Alexander in 1982.

The 60s rock era and free love are fond memories now. Cynthia’s heading into the “final” chapters of her career, closing her PR firm for a profession that she hopes is just as, if not more, satisfying. She wants to be a social worker. Speaking of her classes at City College, she says, “I enjoy learning, retaining myself and my brain. I knew I would enjoy it, but I didn’t know how much.” She eventually plans to get a degree in Social Work from San Francisco State University.

Movin’ On
Leaving PR behind hasn’t been hard. Cynthia will tell you that 30 years in the business is enough for anyone. Plus, celebrity has little effect on her. She’s as comfortable volunteering with the homeless at St. Boniface Church as she is at any gala. “I’ve worked with many people—Jefferson Airplane, Bob Scaggs, Chris Isaak, Michael J. Fox, Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta Jones,” she says. “As long as my mouth works, it doesn’t matter who I talk to.”

It’s little wonder that Cynthia’s nickname is “The Mouth.” She’s oftentimes brassy and definitely direct, but one thing no one can argue is that she has a heart of gold. When asked to keep in touch, she said, “Of course! I hope to be working with your residents and the kids really soon.”

Cynthia after the plunge.