On May 9th, TNDC celebrated its 25th anniversary at the San Francisco Marriott with nearly 650 attendees. Thanks to supporters and underwriting from lead sponsor Bank of America, the event was a success, grossing over $250,000. The breadth of TNDC’s work was not lost. Mistress of Ceremonies Cheryl Jennings of KGO-TV and Event Co-Chairs Nancy Hellman Bechtle and Ellen Magnin Newman congratulated TNDC’s board and staff, saying, “By serving the Tenderloin community, TNDC benefits all of San Francisco.” They couldn’t have said it better.

A Multimedia Affair

Guests saw the results of their support via video presentations, including a KGO-TV feature that aired recently on the 6:00 o’clock news. It included Jacqueline Walker, a TNDC Celebrates 25 Years!

Katrina Survivors Get TNDC Housing

Hurricane Katrina will long be remembered as one of the nation’s worst natural disasters. Thousands of people lost their lives and hundreds of thousands fled their homes to cities across the nation. Since last September, the San Francisco Mayor’s Office of Housing has placed 105 Hurricane Katrina evacuees into homes within the city’s community of nonprofit housing providers. TNDC is housing six evacuees so far, most of them through MOH, and with more people expected to move in this year.

“We’re working to meet this new need,” says Felicia Scrugg-Wright, TNDC’s Director of Property Management. It’s been a challenge because Tenderloin housing consists primarily of single room occupancy units that are fit for only one or two residents. Even so, TNDC is continuing its part to help survivors rebuild their lives.

Surviving Katrina

One lucky Katrina survivor in TNDC housing is Mark. He and several friends were living in a two-story apartment building in New Orleans when the hurricane hit the city. Having lived in Louisiana for many years, Mark was used to hurricane warnings. But before he realized the enormity of Katrina, he had three feet of water at his door. The hurricane’s strong southeasterly winds were causing water from the Gulf Coast to come inland.

Mark and his friends were stuck. The streets and freeways were jammed with people trying to get away. The city was in chaos as people sought refuge in the city’s buildings. Mark and his friends eventually found their way to San Francisco, where they were placed in a TNDC housing unit.

Survivors party it up on the dance floor!
Director’s Desk

Twenty-five years ago, a group of VISTA volunteers, community activists, and people of faith formed an organization with the State of California to create Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation.

Built on the concept of a cooperative against the backdrop of gentrification, TNDC entered the 1980s to preserve the neighborhood as a place where low-income people would always be able to live. TNDC operated out of a commercial space in an Eddy Street apartment building and then in an office above a copy shop. In its first decade saw immense growth with eight buildings, including 450 apartment and residential hotel units, and annual expenses of $1 million.

Today, TNDC is a major property owner and employer in the Tenderloin with 23 residential buildings and over 200 staff members. With $20 million in annual operating costs, TNDC at times more resembles a Fortune 500 company than a grassroots collective, yet the core of TNDC’s mission remains the same — to join Tenderloin residents in preserving the neighborhood and serving people for whom homelessness would be a real possibility if not for TNDC.

Yet despite over two decades of evolution, many problems remain. Nearly half of Americans and three-quarters of renters pay more than they can afford in rent. The people of the Tenderloin are still plagued by persistent poverty and inner-city ills like unsafe, deteriorating housing, street crime, and drug dealing.

But if we despair that little progress has been made, we would miss profound changes in the neighborhood’s character. Over 4,000 households are now in affordable housing in the Tenderloin, owned or leased by more than a dozen nonprofit housing developers like TNDC. Vacant storefronts are nearly nonexistent and — as a result of community activism — a grade school, playground, and police station now serve the Tenderloin’s residents. The Tenderloin is home to 30,000 people from all walks of life. They are of varying races and ethnicities. They are workers, disabled people, adults, children, seniors, and formerly homeless individuals. Each person is striving to overcome barriers and achieve better lives.

The constant these 25 years, in the heart of the Tenderloin, has been TNDC. What would the people of this community face today without the jobs, investment, affordable housing, and economic activity that TNDC has brought? This neighborhood would be very different.

Thanks to public and private support, TNDC oversers community assets that belong to the people of San Francisco and the Tenderloin, for whom the organization was created and exists to serve. From TNDC’s humble roots in 1981 to becoming a pioneer in the supportive housing movement, TNDC is a community development success story — one that we all can take pride in.

Sincerely,

Donald S. Falk
Executive Director

Spirit of Sister Patrick Remembered

TNDC celebrated the grand opening of Curran House on March 21st. Consisting of 67 apartments, it was designed by David Baker + Partners and Gelfand Partners Architects to provide new family housing in the Tenderloin. The $22.6 million project took five years to develop, with financing from Bank of America, Impact Capital, the Mayor’s Office of Housing, Federal Home Loan Bank, and other lenders.

Named after the late Sister Patrick Curran, the building bears the legacy of Sister Patrick’s dogged commitment to people in need. Before becoming Executive Director of St. Anthony Foundation, a homeless service and advocacy agency in the Tenderloin, she spent decades working with the poor and elderly in cities across the nation. Typical of Sister Patrick, she once said, “You can’t give up hope. I see poverty but I see more hope.”

Sister Patrick’s family members — some from as far away as Ireland — came to celebrate the opening of Curran House. Michael Curran shared a few words about his sister. “She was stubborn,” he joked. “She knew we could all be doing a lot more to help others.” It’s only fitting that Curran House will long carry on Sister Patrick’s work by serving people and families in the greatest need.

Settling in San Francisco

Thousands of Katrina survivors are still struggling to rebuild their lives, so Mark is fortunate in his progress so far. His family in Miami, Florida fared well and he was able to come to San Francisco where cousins and friends awaited him. He soon found TNDC via the internet and connected with Natalie Richie, Building Manager of Curran House — where he now resides. “I’m happy to find an affordable studio apartment,” he says. “I was expecting to pay a lot more.” Mark has also found work in the hospitality industry and is living independently. TNDC takes pride in helping Hurricane Katrina survivors like Mark build new roots in San Francisco thanks to TNDC housing.

Katrina can’t be from page 1
leaving the city. Using their emergency survival kit of canned food and bottled water, they spent three days in the apartment. When the rising water became too much to bear, they swam to the second story of the building for safety. The water eventually rose to thirteen feet, shattering windows and causing massive destruction throughout the city.

Hanging by a Thread

It was a long journey ahead. Thanks to rescue efforts, Mark and his friends were airlifted by U.S. Military Police to safety.

“Military personnel hung from a helicopter to get us — one by one — to higher ground,” he says. After the rescue, he needed to get to Texas before reaching San Francisco. Unfortunately, that leg of the trip was just as terrifying. During the plane’s landing in San Antonio, the wind sheared almost knocked it onto its side. “I thought we were going to crash,” says Mark. Not surprisingly, he was glad the bus to San Francisco, even if it took two days.

Michael Curran, brother of late Sister Patrick Curran, speaks of his sister’s tenacity and how she inspired others.

Hurricane Katrina survivor Mark has new roots in San Francisco thanks to TNDC housing.
Walter Paulson: An Active Member of the Community

When asked what he appreciates most about living at TNDC’s Civic Center Residence (CCR), one thing Walter Paulson mentions is the window in his room that overlooks McAllister Street. Not surprisingly, for someone who devotes much of his time and energy to participation in San Francisco civic life. Part collector and amateur historian, part entertainer, and a born-and-breathed San Franciscan, Walter’s unit is an ideal home base from which to explore and memorialize his home city. Prior to moving to CCR in December 2002, Walter lived in various downtown single room occupancy housing units. “I was paying double the rent that I’m now paying and for much smaller rooms,” says Walter. “Plus, it wasn’t permanent housing. I had to renew my lease every three weeks.”

Another plus for Walter is CCR’s location, which is not far from where the San Francisco Board of Supervisors holds its meetings. A frequent attendee, he likes to bring in and share items of historic interest, such as fossils recovered in the city and old photographs. One such photograph shows his mother, a native San Franciscan who worked for the city as a meter maid, presenting former mayor George Moscone with a parking ticket. Pieces of the past aren’t his only interest. Walter also enjoys screeching the supervisors with the help of a karaoke machine.

Walter’s involvement in civic life extends to the airwaves as well. He is a frequent caller on Dr. Dean Edell’s KGO radio show, most recently in April when, during his 34th time on the show, aging was the topic of the day. Fitting, it seems, since his pursuit of an active and fulfilled life is a sharp antidote to the waning enthusiasm that sometimes accompanies time’s passage. When not on radio, Walter might even be seen answering phones on television during live KQED pledge drives.

Among Walter’s other amazing interests is being a participant in the Special Olympics. Walter has won eighteen gold medals over the years in swimming, for freestyle and backstroke, and for track and field in the 800 and 1500 meter races. He plans to compete again in June to qualify for the state competition in the 400 meter relay.

“I’m not as fast as I used to be,” he says. “But it’s good to keep going.”

Facilitating Dialogue Among Youth

The Tenderloin is one of the most ethnically diverse neighborhoods in San Francisco. Youth from TNDC’s After-School Program (TASP) have been engaging in a series of cultural activities and addressing tough social issues. Most recently, the kids celebrated Latino and Chicano heritage for Cinco de Mayo. Over 130 people gathered at the Tenderloin Children’s Playground for poetry readings, Mexican dance performances, and games. The latter included a contest called, “Who Am I?” With verbal descriptions, children guessed the identities of Latino entertainers, like musician Santana and actress Salma Hayek, and athletes like golfer Nancy Lopez and boxer Oscar de la Hoya. “We collaborated with organizations throughout San Francisco,” says Jennifer Hom, TASP Program Coordinator. “Besides being fun for the kids, these events bring communities together.”

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If you’d like to see more of Walter, check out the upcoming Will Smith feature film tentatively titled Pursuit of Happiness. Walter played part of a Tenderloin crowd when scenes were filmed in San Francisco. This role couldn’t be more appropriate. Walter has been quite an active, and accomplished, member of the Tenderloin community.

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Another sobering picture was presented during Black History Month in February. During TASP’s 7th annual African-American festival, powerful messages were conveyed about violence, especially between African-American males. Participants saw moving images of young Black men who died needlessly because of violent acts in San Francisco. Some of them were known by members of the Tenderloin community. Seventeen-year old Claudia Polanco voiced the need for peace in a poem entitled “The Saddest Thing.” She read, “Lessing friend after friend, time after time, minute after minute, it’s getting old.” No one should be exposed to violence, yet it’s part of daily life for some youths.

About 140 people gathered for the community event at St. Boniface Church. They gave tribute to the late Coretta Scott King, widow of Martin Luther King Jr., who, along with Rosa Parks, was an iconic leader of the 1960s civil rights movement. They also enjoyed performances. Alex Keel, a 14-year old rising star from the Bay Area, thrilled the audience with her vocal talents.

Through these activities, young people in the Tenderloin have forums to address issues affecting them. They provoke thought and discussion while building a sense of community. In the process, the youth can better understand and navigate this rich, and oftentimes challenging, world they’re in.
Donor Spotlight: Nancy Hellman Bechtle and Ellen Magnin Newman

TNDC was fortunate to have Nancy Hellman Bechtle and Ellen Magnin Newman as co-chairs of its 25th Anniversary Celebration. The event’s success was largely due to their support. To learn more about our event mavens, we asked a few questions.

Developments: How and when did you first become familiar with TNDC?
Nancy: I learned about TNDC 10 years ago when Kelly Cullen asked me to go in the pool at the Celebrity Pool Toss. I thought it was the craziest sounding event I had ever heard of — and of course something I would thoroughly enjoy — so I jumped in.
Ellen: I learned of TNDC about twenty years ago from Holger Gantz, former General Manager of the Hilton San Francisco, who was a product champion for TNDC before anybody knew about a Pool Toss or anything else.

Developments: What is most meaningful to you about TNDC and why did you decide to co-chair its 25th Anniversary Celebration?
Nancy: TNDC does such a great job of housing people who really need it: the poorest of the poor, thousands of individuals and families who would probably be on the streets were it not for TNDC. When Kelly asked me to chair the event, how could I say no?
Ellen: TNDC has been a courageous pioneer in building low-cost housing in an area where most people wouldn’t venture. Plus, I would never say “no” to Nancy Bechtle, and since I would never be a candidate to fall into a swimming pool, I was delighted to co-chair the event.

Developments: What has been the most exciting and challenging aspects of being the event’s co-chairs?
Nancy: Everybody involved at TNDC is fantastic and fun to work with. I only do things when I like the people and the organization does something I believe in. As to challenges, they’re pretty much the same with all events, raising as much money as possible and getting people excited.
Ellen: The most exciting aspect has been the enthusiastic and warm response of everyone whom I’ve asked for support, whether it was “in-kind” or financial. There are such warm feelings for TNDC on the part of the Bay Area community.

Developments: What’s next for the two of you?
Nancy: We’re retiring. Aren’t we Ellen?
Ellen: Well, happily, there is no “next” on my agenda at the moment.

Developments: Thank you Nancy and Ellen for being great sports. Thanks too for co-chairing TNDC’s silver anniversary. It would not have been the same without you.

Cheers to 25 Years!
As the evening concluded, with raised champagne glasses and the singing of “Happy Birthday” by Beach Blanket Babylon, TNDC staff and event guests glowed in the spirit of solidarity. TNDC’s 25th Anniversary Celebration had lived up to its name.

Highlighting Partnerships
TNDC’s work depends on partnerships with community leaders. Former TNDC Executive Director Bro. Kelly Cullen presented the first Bro. Kelly Cullen Community Service Award to friend Chip Conley, Founder and CEO of Joie de Vivre Hospitality. Chip’s work with at-risk teens led to the birth of TNDC’s Celebrity Pool Toss, a benefit for TASP that has raised over $2 million during the event’s 13-year run. Chip’s commitment is paying off. The kids at the center are thriving.

Community support is reason too for the success of TNDC’s first Designer Dollhouse Silent Auction. For the dinner, Andrew Skurman Architects, Asian Neighborhood Design, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP, Gelfand Partners Architects, Barcelon & Jang, and Saida + Sullivan Design Partners designed and built stunning miniature houses. The "houses" brought out imaginations and pocketbooks, raising over $15,000.

Donor Spotlight: Nancy Hellman Bechtle and Ellen Magnin Newman

The "designer dollhouses" for auction were just captivating!

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Event Co-Chairs Ellen Magnin Newman (left) and Nancy Hellman Bechtle strike a pose with Dede Wilsey (far right) and Christie Noel Hunter, from Beach Blanket Babylon.

Donor Spotlight: Nancy Hellman Bechtle and Ellen Magnin Newman