Finding EKATVA (oneness) in the Tenderloin

A cultural exchange with youth from India allows TASP participants to learn what it means to be cultural ambassadors.

Over the years, I have been extremely fortunate to share in many beautiful experiences with TASP participants; each one is a precious gift that reminds me of the infinite capacity, strength, brilliance, and inquisitiveness of the young people we serve.

One such experience happened in late May when TNDC’s Tenderloin After-School Program hosted a group of 16 children from India. The Indian kids were doing a 3-week dance tour entitled “EKATVA” (meaning “oneness”) that brought them to San Francisco. The San Francisco stop on their world tour and the visit with TASP were made possible by Ranjan Dey, owner of New Delhi Restaurant, and an exceptional group of dedicated volunteers. Compassionate Chefs Café, founded by Dey, has been funding TASP and

Planting the Seeds for a Healthier Community: Garden Expansion Plan.

Thanks to the generous individuals who attended our Annual Birthday Dinner, we raised nearly $43,000 of the $50,000 needed to expand our Tenderloin People’s Garden. Designs are underway to create three additional gardens in TNDC buildings, increasing the supply of fresh vegetables to residents.

TNDC’s Tenderloin People’s Garden began in 2010 with the transformation of a once vacant lot into a vibrant and vital community garden near City Hall. Since then, we’ve brought together 379 volunteers of all ages and ethnicities to grow food and community. Our garden has harvested over 2,500 lbs of food, distributed to 400 people.

Given the wild success of the Tenderloin People’s Garden, we are eager to expand our offerings with three new gardens. TNDC has land that can be easily transformed into
Another interesting college was USC. We got to see the beautiful campus, learn about the school’s amazing history, and the tour guide gave us lots of information. He encouraged us to consider USC as one of the colleges that we apply to in the future. He told us about one of the USC football players who went to Galileo High School (the same school some of us attend). USC has a variety of sports and there's a field for every one of them. That’s pretty important to those of us who are trying to play sports in college. Furthermore, USC provides plenty of scholarships and financial aid for www.tndc.org

At Chapman University, they let us sit in their Board Room for our information session. Fancy! They offer many different private scholarships that are tailored to low-income and first-generation college students. The best part of all was the cafeteria food. They had “all you can eat,” just like the USC cafeteria. Another interesting college was Occidental. The school has 31 majors and classes are kept small so that teachers can really get to know their students. Community building is important at “Oxy,” and the school does a lot of different things to make sure students get to know each other. For example, all students live on campus for the first three years. The school also provides lots of opportunities to take classes that are not in your major. These things showed us that the school really cares about how students learn and cares about their experience while in college.

In preparing for the college tour, we knew that getting to know the city was just as important as visiting the colleges- it’s where we may spend four or more years of our lives. After our college visits each day, we got to do fun activities that are part of L.A.’s local culture. We hopped on the Santa Monica Pier, rode bikes up and down the beach for 3 hours, spent a day at Magic Mountain, and one night we even went bowling.
RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT
Brent Paradise: living life to the fullest, thanks to TNDC.

Mr. Paradise is a resident at the Civic Center Residence, and even though he has only lived there for a little over a year, he credits TNDC and the staff at CCR with greatly improving his quality of life.

Brent Paradise moved to San Francisco in 1974. He came to visit for a two-week vacation from South Dakota and never returned. In a matter of days, he found an apartment on Washington Street and a job as a concierge at the Fairmont Hotel.

Brent has worked in the travel industry most of his life, first at the Fairmont and then the Hyatt, then for several years as a booking agent for United Airlines. When United Airlines filed for bankruptcy, Mr. Paradise lost his pension. Close to retirement age, it was hard for Brent to find work, but he found an opportunity to work as a travel agent in Sausalito. His generous boss gave him the opportunity to work his way up and shared the perks of the job, including some free trips.

For 31 years, Mr. Paradise lived in the same apartment building. His neighbors became his friends, sharing holidays and potlucks and looking after each other’s pets and children. When the owners passed away, their children sold the building, and the new owner shut the building down for five years. Finding a new apartment he could afford was difficult. Prices had gone up drastically, and as an aging worker in a rapidly changing job market, Mr. Paradise found himself underemployed. After 31 years, Mr. Paradise could no longer afford to live in San Francisco.

Brent found a single room for $850 a month in an SRO Hotel on Howard Street. He says the building had 28 rooms and only one bathroom. Dirt and garbage lined the hallways. The bathroom was so filthy, he would beg friends to let him shower at their place. When Mr. Paradise fell ill and could not work, he could not pay his rent at the SRO hotel. Fortunately, with the help of his patient advocate, Mr. Paradise found out about a vacancy at TNDC’s Civic Center Residence (CCR). Brent says that CCR is a 100% improvement. “I am so grateful to be here. The staff does so much to keep this place clean.” Mr. Paradise also credits the staff at CCR for making the building such a welcoming place. “Erin is so kind. She does her job with so much empathy and compassion. And Ms. Stewart has such patience. This is a great place to live.” When asked if there was one thing he would like TNDC to do differently, Mr. Paradise said, “I would like to see the building reopen and offer more units.”

“There are many of us who are so very grateful. You save people’s lives. You really do. I was homeless for awhile and this place is a god-send. Thank you.” - Brent Paradise

TNDC’s wettest and wildest fundraiser of the year!

On Wednesday, October 10, 2012, local celebrities will take the plunge for youth & families in the Tenderloin. Join us at The Phoenix Hotel/Chambers EAT + DRINK from 6:00pm – 10:00pm.

Event Co-Chairs
Laura Pfaff and Jim Losi

Event Hosts
Lynne Marie Stewart,
Film and Television Actor
Suzanne Whang,
Actor, Author, Comedian

Visit www.tndc.org/pooltoss for ticket and sponsorship information.
For questions, contact Lisa Rapaszky at (415) 358-3907 or lrapszky@tndc.org

Planting Seeds
New Garden Locations:
990 Polk Street
Home to 154 low-income senior tenants in 108 units. 50 units are subsidized for formerly homeless seniors.

Curran House (145 Taylor)
Home to low-income families with 67 units and 177 residents. 57 units house very low-income families with children, and 10 are reserved for formerly homeless families.

Yosemite Apartments (480 Eddy)
Home to 41 low-income tenants in 32 units.

TNDC’s Garden Expansion Project is a systematic approach to educate, empower, and address food injustice for San Francisco’s most vulnerable populations. Join us today to create a viable and sustainable alternative to hunger!

To learn more about the garden, visit www.tndc.org/garden and watch the video produced by Cheryl Jennings of ABC Channel 7 News.
The efforts may help us produce more housing, but ensuring the lowest-income residents of our city feel a sense of home in San Francisco goes beyond bricks and mortar. For them to feel at home, we must ensure they have opportunities to thrive, choices for how they want to live their lives, and equitable access to programs and services that they want and need.

At TNDC, we do not just build buildings; we create community so that the lowest-income residents of our city can feel that sense of home so essential to their well-being.

In February, I also wrote of TNDC’s need to evolve, innovate, and stay relevant in order to respond to the challenges we face. As financing for affordable housing wanes, TNDC is re-focusing on our community development programs. Our August issue of TNDC Developments has some shining examples of this work.

I thank you for your continued support of TNDC and commitment to affordable housing.

Best regards,

Joseph S. Newfield
Executive Director

Joseph spent a decade living in a former pasta factory he converted into a live-work space, he found TNDC quickly when our 8th & Howard apartments were under construction, and he has watched the organization grow over the years with satisfaction.

“It’s not just that you’re housing people; TNDC is contributing to the built environment with something tangible.”

When asked to consider the best aspect of all TNDC does, his answer is definitive: “Real roofs over the heads of thousands of people. It is impressive. Walk around our city and you will see 30 buildings operated by TNDC.”

Joseph also has a special appreciation for the inherent value of older neighborhoods. “Buildings are an asset. Homelessness in particular is such a hard issue in San Francisco; it’s easy to give up. TNDC is impressive for its effectiveness and its scale – thousands of people are housed.”

BECOME A MONTHLY SUSTAINER TODAY

When you become a Sustainer, your monthly gift will provide a reliable stream of support that is so vital to providing the affordable housing the lowest-income residents of our city depend on. You can feel confident that your support is truly making a difference by providing critical services like healthy snacks to participants in TNDC’s TASP wholesome School Program, clean and well-maintained home environments with 24-hour desk clerks, and dedicated social workers in each building who help residents retain their housing for the long term.

Thank You to Our Sustainers

We are especially grateful to the following individuals– many of whom have been giving generously for a decade or more– who are helping TNDC achieve real, significant, and lasting change in people’s lives and in the life of the community:

Anjum Mathur
Wendy Ben
Donald J. Barret
Pamela F. Cassell
Nancy Shen
Margaret Chew and Eric Loo
Rodell R. Clarner
Jackie Osland
Reggie Doughty and Poppy C. Liu
Lila Dourouni and Chah Godin
Annie and Charles Eckert
Jack Fincker
Jannick, Friedman
Larry Haft
Sarah Mann
Vandana Mani Harms
Dovima B. Hofman
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Michelle C. Hudson
Steve R. Hibshman
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Anthony Lin
Jeffrey Lewis
Marla Mack
Elizabeth A. Mander
Wendy McLaughlin
Karen McCown
David E. McGregor
Joseph S. Newfield
Michelle and Robert Michel
Christopher M. Pekelnick
Jean M. Pennington
Catherine M. Pantzas
Vicki Rashid
Theresa D. Ross
Ellen Rosenblatt
Shane S. Schapiro
Sadie Jernigan
Valeri and Nowell Valeri
Chanda Van and David Pritzkau
Andrew Zimmerman
Joylin Zwolinski

Manav Sadhna (part of Gandhi Ashram in Ahmednabad) for 6 years, and it’s been his dream to get kids from TASP and EKATVA together in person.

In preparation for this exciting visit, TASP organized a project-based learning series that started April 2012. Our goals were: 1) to build engagement, curiosity and investment on the part of the TASP youth so “I learned that it’s important to help people because I might need help sometime too.” - Nidhi Patel, TASP Participant

that they would take ownership of the process and lead the way, and 2) to create the foundation for a truly unique cultural exchange. We began by framing a question for the kids: “How can we, as cultural ambassadors, model learning and generosity for the EKATVA kids and ourselves?” We talked about what it means to be a cultural ambassador, shared what we knew individually about India, and then reflected on the importance of generosity and learning as goals in and of themselves. Over the next 5 weeks, our group of 14 TASP participants, ages 7 to 16, spent time learning about India, visiting the EKATVA website to research the performers’ names and personal stories, sampled Indian food (compliments of Ranjith of course), shopped for and organized individual gift bags for each EKATVA guest, and even learned phrases in Gujarati, the language spoken by the EKATVA kids. TASP participant Nidhi Patel reflected on this process: “I learned that it’s important to help me because I might need help sometime too. We talked about the importance of generosity and the way I modeled this was to make personalized cards for the gift bags we gave to each of the EKATVA kids. I wanted them to be happy and excited about visiting TASP!”

What was most amazing to me was watching how our TASP kids from information and leadership of Joseph Newfield. Always curious, competitive, and enthusiastic, longtime San Francisco resident Joseph Newfield has been supporting TNDC with regular monthly contributions for well over a decade.

“The problems that TNDC is working on are important to me. Supportive housing and services are an important contribution to our city.” - Joseph Newfield

“Becoming a monthly donor was simple to set up and it’s an easy way to support what I believe in. Knowing that my donations happen automatically gives me peace of mind.”

Joseph is Co-Founder and Creative Director at School of Thought, a San Francisco-based marketing and advertising agency combining award-winning creative with a passion for moving the needle. In this role, Joseph spends a lot of time helping clients by finding the people who need what they have to offer and getting those people to take action.

A San Francisco resident since 1992
**Kelly Cullen Community**

*The dream of affordable housing for the formerly homeless is taking shape.*

In December, the first residents of Kelly Cullen Community will begin moving into their new homes. For many, this will be the first home they’ve had in years. This adaptive re-use and historical preservation of the former Central YMCA will partner housing and health services for 172 formerly homeless in one building. Tenants will have access to on-site social workers, a community garden, kitchen, and laundry facilities.

Earlier this year, the project was one of four nationwide selected by the Corporation for Supportive Housing for a Social Innovation Fund grant. Providing $400,000 annually for services and operating costs, the SIF grant will enable TNDC and our partner, the Department of Public Health, to study the linkages between health and homelessness.

As an extra special treat, TASP participants also got to attend the EKATVA dance performance on May 27 at Zellerbach Hall in Berkeley. The two hour performance featured elaborate choreography, beautiful costumes, and narratives about social justice leaders from around the world such as Mahatma Gandhi, Cesar Chavez, and Nelson Mandela. We hung out after the performance to see the EKATVA kids one last time, and again, it felt like a huge reunion, with laughing, chatting, and lots of picture-taking. I’m still in awe of the energy and love that was so effortlessly generated throughout the weekend and deeply moved by the investment shown by TASP participants through the whole process. I’m not sure how it all happened— how the magic ignited and spread so organically— but it was one of the most amazing experiences I have ever had the honor of witnessing.

More importantly, I know this is an experience that will stay with our participants for many years to come.

Written by Lanta Choo, TNDC’s Tenderloin After-School Program Manager

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the youngest to the oldest, immediately stepped up and took over. They were curious, committed, and excited. They asked lots of questions and made even more suggestions— exemplifying the values of learning and generosity throughout the workshop. When the EKATVA performers finally arrived at TASP on May 26, it was more like a family reunion than a meeting of strangers from foreign countries. I saw TASP kids ... on the floor of the restaurant! There is no way to adequately capture the moment in words, but suffice it to say that afterwards, the kids were inseparable. Ranjan then treated everyone to a huge, gourmet Indian lunch during which the kids chatted and laughed like they had known each other for years. When I went around to all the tables, I saw all the kids laughing, talking, and gesturing, and I was reminded that sometimes we, as adults, just need to get out of the way so that kids can do their thing.

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31st Annual Birthday Dinner raises $300,000 to build homes and hope in the Tenderloin.

More than 500 sponsors, donors, volunteers and community leaders came out to support TNDC and the lowest-income residents of our city.

On May 9, 2012, TNDC celebrated 31 years of building homes and hope in the Tenderloin and beyond. Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, donors, supporters, and more than 500 guests, we raised $300,000 for the lowest-income residents of our city.

The evening—hosted by Cheryl Jennings, News Anchor at ABC7/KGO TV, and Co-Chaired by Fred Levin & Nancy Livingston—was one of our most successful to date!

Supporters let their silly side show by donning party hats, blowing bubbles and sounding off their support with kazoos. Guest also enjoyed a fabulous meal and custom baked birthday cakes at the Hilton San Francisco Union Square, and danced to the music of the Robert Vickers Orchestra. Beach Blanket Babylon sang a special birthday toast.

This year’s Brother Kelly Cullen Community Service Award was presented to Mimi Yee, Owner of the Manor House Restaurant, who provides low-cost meals and a community gathering place to Tenderloin residents six days a week.

Funds raised will go to provide housing and meaningful services that enhance the quality of life for low-income residents living in the Tenderloin and help make the neighborhood a better place to live.

A special request for donations at the event will go to support TNDC’s Garden Expansion Project (featured on Page 1).

A special thanks to all the volunteers and staff who worked to create this one-of-a-kind event.

SPECIAL THANKS

To our Skyscraper Sponsor: Cahill Contractors, Inc. for their continued commitment to TNDC and to the residents of the Tenderloin.

To our event co-chairs: Fred Levin & Nancy Livingston for their inspiring words and help in raising an extra $40,000 towards our Garden Expansion Project.

To our event host: Cheryl Jennings, News Anchor at ABC7/KGO TV for her tireless dedication to capturing and sharing the stories of the Tenderloin.

SEE MORE ONLINE

Couldn’t attend the event? Visit TNDC online to see what you missed. WWW.TNDC.ORG/BDAY

• Watch the story of Mimi Yee, Brother Kelly Cullen Community Service Award Honoree, and the work she is doing to build community at the Manor House Restaurant.

• Find links to more than 100 photos from the event.

• Watch Executive Director, Don Falk speak to the audience about what it means to have a home.