

# Postal Service blamed for census form mail mess-up

Delivered in bulk  
to many SROs,  
not to individuals

BY TOM CARTER

**T**HE U.S. Postal Service, already facing the city's lawsuit over its discriminatory mail deliveries to SROs, made a mess of delivering census forms to Tenderloin SROs, census workers say.

"Our canvassers found stacks of census forms on the ground in SROs, and found them with the managers," said Steve Woo, a TNDC staffer and community organizer with the 2010 Census.

The canvassers went door to door March 17 through April 23, encouraging residents to fill out their census forms.

"That's when we connected the dots and went to the managers and found the problem," Woo told The Extra. "They (residents) just weren't getting their mail. Then we targeted

our outreach to 120 private SROs and apartment buildings. We reached 4,500 households."

In some cases, Woo said, canvassers took the forms from hotel managers and distributed them under residents' doors.

SRO mail deliveries have been a festering issue since 2004 when Central City SRO Collaborative activists and residents began their protests. They decried lost letters and government checks caused by bulk drops and demanded SRO residents be treated as apartment dwellers requiring individual locked box deliveries. Supervisor Chris Daly's ordinance in 2006 called for the city's 501 SROs to treat the tenants as permanent residents when it comes to mail delivery. But progress was slow, then came to a halt December 2008 when the Postal Service announced that it couldn't afford to deliver to thousands more mailboxes and would resume dropping mail at the SROs' front desks.

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

NO. 101

PUBLISHED  
BY THE  
SAN FRANCISCO  
STUDY CENTER

JUNE  
2010

## HOSPITAL UNDER PRESSURE

Community  
demands  
some lasting  
benefits

PAGE 2

## BOEDDEKER DODGES A BULLET

Shuttered  
summer was  
a close call

PAGE 4



## TENDERLOIN GOES DIGITAL

Hood on  
display in  
high-tech fest

PAGE 5

# CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

## 'TENACITY AND COURAGE'



PHOTO BY HEIDI SWILLINGER

**Judge Mary C. Morgan's Behavioral Health Court commencement — the first to be held in a Hall of Justice courtroom — fetes citizens' personal triumphs.**

# Graduation Day

## Behavioral Health Court ceremony trumps time in jail

BY JONATHAN NEWMAN

**T**HE Hall of Justice can be a sorrowful place. Windowless hallways and courtrooms deny the sunshine's entry. In dim artificial light, schools of the accused dart in and out of courtrooms hoping to avoid the law's net. Clumps of lawyers trundle papers to and fro. A screech of deals and pleas and punishments underscores the daily court calendar.

Lenny Bruce was once prosecuted for obscenity here. His cryptic comment — "The only justice in the Hall of Justice is in the halls of the Hall of Justice" — still seems apt.

But right can happen, too, as it did at the Behavioral Health Court graduation ceremony May 13, when 17 citizens were honored for successfully completing court-imposed programs necessitated by their prior missteps.

Cheers, applause and some joyful tears of relief swept through a packed Department 15 courtroom on the second floor, where Judge Mary C. Morgan presided over the 14th semiannual graduation proceeding of a system inaugurated seven years ago and designed, in the words of the national Council of State Governments Justice Center, "to improve the response to people with mental illnesses who come into contact

with the criminal justice system." Translation: Treatment instead of jail.

Since 2003, the San Francisco Behavioral Health Court has drawn together social workers, County Jail psychiatric service providers, cops, probation officers, substance abuse counselors, district attorneys and public defenders in a collaborative effort to find solutions, other than incarceration, for those whose mental health problems — sometimes aggravated by drug or alcohol use — have resulted in harmful collisions with law and order.

To date, 241 people have graduated Behavioral Health Court. They've successfully navigated personalized programs developed after clinical screening by jail psychiatric services and benefitted from selection of treatment providers, all of whom are contracted through the Department of Public Health.

For many, the court-mandated mental health and substance abuse programs are coupled with housing placements, and 60% of the participants are partnered with Citywide Case Management workers. A newly devised computer tracking system has yet to identify a success/fail rate with some participants staying two or more years in ongoing treatment and recovery settings.

When Judge Morgan finished a short afternoon court calendar and announced that graduation ceremonies would begin, the packed courtroom rang with applause. She noted that these ceremonies were occurring for the first time in a Hall of Justice courtroom.

In past years the ceremonies had been held at various community rooms, including the Main Library and Salvation Army's Kroc Center.

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

**The Elm Hotel** helped distribute census forms that were dumped on the counter.