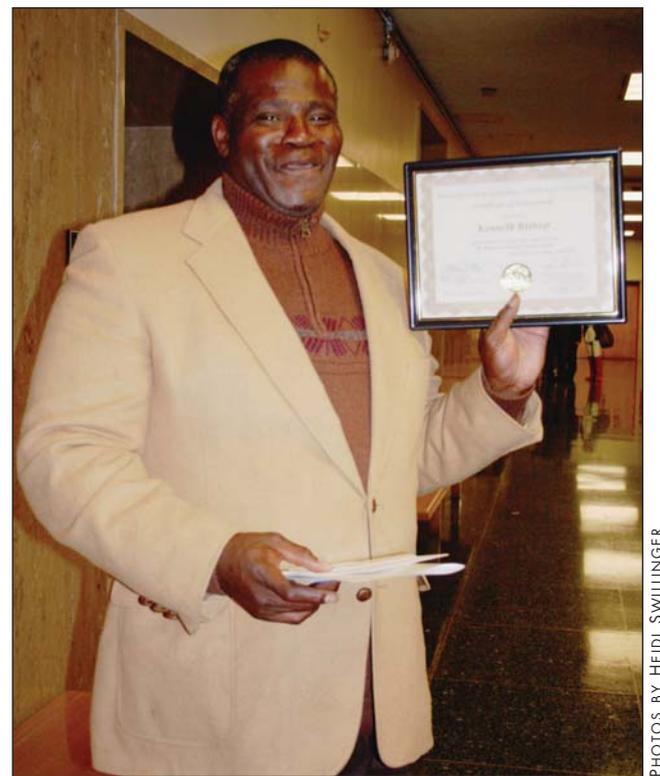




Christopher Kuykendall — with his attorney, *Betsy Wolkin* — got praise from the judge.



A proud Kenneth Bishop displays his diploma.

PHOTOS BY HEIDI SWILLINGER

Court where defendants get treatment instead of jail

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Then Morgan praised the assembled graduates, the families and friends who supported their efforts, and the mental health recovery teams and volunteers for their “incredibly outstanding work.”

“By your actions you have demonstrated your commitment to treatment, to becoming whole different persons. You’ve shown more tenacity, more courage than maybe at any other time in your lives. And you know what? You’ve become great teachers by your example,” Morgan said.

Kenneth Bishop, 52, was the first of the May graduating class, called to the front of the courtroom by his case worker, Mary Anne Cabansagan, to receive his diploma.

One evening a few years ago, Bishop was smoking a cigarette outside his Bayview residence. He wasn’t taking his mental health meds and, by his own admission, was “just drifting through life.” A stranger approached and asked Bishop if he knew where he could get drugs. Sure, Bishop told him.

“Everybody in the neighborhood knows where it’s sold,” Bishop said. So, he led the way around the

corner, took the stranger’s money and returned with the drugs. Mission accomplished — only the stranger was an undercover cop and Bishop went to jail on a sales charge.

Enter Behavioral Health Court. Bishop got back on his medication, found a group home and enrolled in City College. He’s proud of himself and feels closer to his family, particularly a nephew who is in college.

“I’m more positive now. I have more respect for others. I want to be a leader, not a follower. Set an example,” Bishop said.

Christopher Kuykendall was praised by Judge Morgan as well. “You are doing a very good job,” she said, but Kuykendall didn’t receive his diploma. He was in court for a progress report. If he continues on course, he’ll graduate in six months.

“It’s been a hard struggle with addiction,” the 39-year-old said. “I’ve been out of County Jail about a year now. I used to do marijuana, crack and alcohol. I’ve completed three drug programs — Grove Street, Baker Place and Sober Living — and I’m back at my mom’s place in Oakland. I got a case manager at Citywide and I’m going to school, learning to be a librarian. I used to live on Sixth, the Seneca

Hotel, until my selling and using just got out of control,” he recalled.

Behavioral Health Court gave Kuykendall some options besides selling and using drugs and jail. “I got a chance to better my life, you know? Hey, where I go to school some guys smoke weed or drink before class. They offer, but I ain’t interested. I made sacrifices, big decisions,” he said.

As Kuykendall walked away from the courtroom, his attorney, Betsy Wolkin, took his arm and announced to bystanders, “He’s a good man.”

Antonio Riley graduated, despite his failure at Behavioral Health Court once before. Riley lived in the Tenderloin lost in a fog of marijuana and alcohol when he was busted for robbery and petty theft. From County Jail he called Kathleen Connelly at Citywide Case Management and “begged for one more chance,” Riley said. He got it. Now, he lives on his own in the Ingleside.

“I’m stabilized,” he said, and happy to be back in touch with his mother and sister in San Mateo.

At the end of graduation ceremonies the crowd gathered at the front of the courtroom for cookies, cake and assorted treats.

Somewhere, Lenny Bruce is smiling. ■

Boeddeker dodges a shutdown summer — but zero camps

BY TOM CARTER

BOEDDEKER Park escaped closure this summer when the mayor reached an agreement with unions representing city employees.

The mayor’s budget-slashing plan to lay off 1,000 city employees — Boeddeker Director Rob McDaniels along with scores of other Rec and Park employees — was averted by the May 12 deal that capped layoffs at 425.

“Otherwise, we would have shuttered Boeddeker Park at the end of May,” said Steve Cismowski, Rec and Park Neighborhood Services area manager.

BOEDDEKER GETS ZIP

Even so, the park faces a bleak summer. It will host none of the 57 summer camps in the enhanced program the mayor created after the school district eliminated summer school. Tenderloin Recreation Center and SoMa Recreation Center, however, were awarded several programs.

“It’s our busiest time of the year,” Cismowski said. “Kids have to have somewhere to go.”

Boeddeker Park is open to adults 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. weekdays and kids with adults can be in the children’s playground from 2-5 p.m. The park on weekends resembles a lifeless monument; it’s closed.

McDaniels offers a free adult and senior exercise class 10 to 11 a.m. weekdays. After-

noons, he is assigned to the Tenderloin Recreation Center.

Gone now, after the layoffs, are Co-Director Melvina Hill’s programs such as senior bingo, with prizes, run by her and her volunteer husband Kenneth Pratt on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Hill’s other popular programs were outdoor tea time in the upper picnic area, indoor movies and parent and kid art explorations. They ended, as planned, in mid-May and afterward, unexpectedly, Hill was transferred to another park to help run its summer programs.

More bad news for Boeddeker: It wasn’t on the People in Plazas summer concert performance schedule for the second year. Eight years of funding the park’s summer music with a Koret Foundation grant arranged by a Market Street Association member ended in 2009 when the member retired.

The Tenderloin CBD stepped in last year and gave the park \$1,500, and Betty Traynor, Friends of Boeddeker chair, scheduled three bands. Traynor said at the Friends’ May 13 meeting she would ask the CBD for another grant.

The four summer camps at Tenderloin Recreation Center two blocks from Boeddeker, full since May 17, have waiting lists. So the closest camps for Tenderloin kids are at the SoMa Recreation Center at Sixth and Folsom streets. It is offering quite a few activities for kids and adults; some are free. As of May 17, all were wide open and begging for signups.

Cismowski was quick to add at the Friends

meeting that parents needn’t sweat the fees. “Don’t let the dollar sign stop you,” he said. “Contact us.” Children in public housing attend the camps free. There is no public housing in the Tenderloin.

SOMA SUMMER ACTIVITIES

Here is the SoMa Rec Center’s summer schedule:

Sports camps in the gym for 7- to 14-year-olds. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eight weekly sessions mid-June through August; cost for residents is \$122 a session, nonresidents, \$175. Extended care available, 8:30 to 10 a.m. and 4 to 5:30 p.m. Each 1½-hour period costs \$45.

Boys and girls 6 to 13 can learn soccer fundamentals on nine Sundays, 10 a.m. to noon. Cost is \$36.

Teen Social Hours, 18 of them beginning June 15 through Aug. 12 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2 to 4 p.m. for ages 13 to 17. Workshops, social activities and field trips. They’re free. As are Teens on the Town, which meets nine times from noon to 4 p.m. to explore the city on Wednesdays.

Adult badminton on Thursdays, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., costs \$18. Adult workout sessions and table tennis are free on Sundays. Seniors 55 and up can join the social club that meets Wednesdays and Thursdays, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., for bingo, games and field trips.

For more details, see sfreconline.org and click on Summer camps guide. ■