

# Free toilet opens in TL

CBD funds W.C. at Rescue Mission — 3-month pilot

BY TOM CARTER

A NEW, free public toilet in the Tenderloin is expected to bring some blessed relief to the neighborhood after years of complaints in community meetings and to the police over people using sidewalks as bathrooms.

The Tenderloin Community Benefit District has contracted with the San Francisco Rescue Mission to open a unisex bathroom for the public five days a week starting Feb. 1. The Mission's bathroom at 140 Turk St. is about 60 feet straight back from the entrance and visible behind a small stage. It will be open from 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, the neighborhood's only free toilet open all day weekdays, except for the Main Library which is open seven days.

The program is a three-month pilot that ends May 1. From the CBD's \$1,300-a-month grant, the mission will hire a monitor to safeguard the toilet and collect data. If

the data demonstrate a need is being met, said Dana Hilliard, acting CBD manager, the program will be refunded.

The budget didn't include a line item for plumbing repairs, an omission some people in the know say may come back to haunt the project.

The Rescue Mission's Clint Ladine, also the CBD's recently elected board president, said he had "thought of" the plumbing issue but hadn't acted on it. He indicated the Mission would pay any plumbing costs.

"We'll just eat it," he said. "Or, maybe we'll get lucky."

The project adds one toilet to a short list of free ones at Hospitality House's Self Help Center, 290 Turk St.; Youth With a Mission, 357 Ellis St.; Boeddeker Park and the Main Library. But it doesn't make up for the facility that was closed years ago

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# CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

## 'FINAL DIGNITY'



PHOTO BY TOM CARTER

Rev. Glenda Hope reads scriptures on a Leavenworth Street sidewalk where a 20-year-old father, who had grown up in the Tenderloin, had been shot to death Aug. 27 in North Beach.

# The Tenderloin closer

## Rev. Glenda Hope gives residents a caring sendoff

BY TOM CARTER

WHEN someone dies among the Tenderloin's poor there's a crying need for a dignified closure for the life that has passed, regardless of how it was lived.

One person, more than anyone, has answered the call to perform this final task. She's 5-foot and rail-thin and at 74 has grandmotherly gray hair. Sometimes she's mistaken for a nun because of her clerical collar. She has fearlessly traversed the seedy hood's unforgiving streets for more than three decades on her way to honor the dead in ceremonies in low-rent hotels.

Rev. Glenda Hope, the closer, is a fixture among the residents who may one day unknowingly receive her services. In a low voice tinged with a Southern drawl — her ice-blue eyes soft and compassionate — she bestows on prostitutes, drug addicts and dealers, robbers, alcoholics and the mentally troubled the identical reverence she gives to the disabled, low-income workers, immigrant families and pensioners who dominate the central city's demographics.

Her last name — like a beacon to the city's sketchiest neighborhood — is from her late husband, Scott Hope, a San Francisco State University education professor, who died in 1997.

"The memorials are a final dignity to those who couldn't have them," Hope says. "They offer a place of comfort and the beginning of healing for mourners."

Most memorials take place in SRO lobbies or community rooms, which vary from threadbare and musty to clean and cheery. Sometimes only a couple of people show up and a few who do may not have even known the deceased. Memorials with 40 to 50 mourners are exceptional. A bouquet or two is always on a table in front, sometimes photos, cards and mementos. Mourners are anxious for closure, yes, but a side attraction to the event is free food, often ethnic fare — from Filipino to soul food — and always with sugary baked goods. The largesse is donated by the hotel, or social workers, less often by family and friends.

After acknowledging the deceased and quoting the Bible, Hope asks for reflections from the mourners. Life is hard in the Tenderloin and the remarks are often revealing.

One widow, a little tipsy at the 11 a.m. rite, regretted she hadn't seen more of her late husband. The reason, she said, was that he had spent so much time in jail. Asked later if he had done anything well, she said without blinking, "Sell heroin."

Another time, a dolled-up woman said what a wonderful guy the deceased had been, but she had known him "years ago in New Orleans when he was a waitress." One man confessed his friend was a real "son of a bitch."

"Sometimes I get surprised," Hope says. "I've had to handle some sticky wickets. Sometimes people don't know when to stop."

In June 2004, Hope contacted Central

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PHOTO BY TOM CARTER

Carlos Jackson of the Rescue Mission shows the free toilet.