

Farmers' market gives away a ton of food

Al Hullana, farmer and member of Heart of the City's board of directors, (left), passes over his weekly donation of cabbages and root vegetables to Nella Manuel, lead donation program volunteer, who also coordinates TNDC's Tenderloin People's Garden.

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

AT 4:30 on a damp Wednesday afternoon, farmer Al Hullana slid a red plastic bin of cabbages and root vegetables across the table to TNDC volunteer Nella Manuel. She grinned broadly at the bounty. He nodded happily, if a little wearily.

It was the end of a long day at the Heart of the City Farmers Market for Hullana, who's been trucking in produce from his 70-acre organic farm in Merced to sell every week since the market opened three

decades ago.

In November, Hullana joined more than 20 other farmers who, when they're done selling at the end of Wednesday market days, set aside perishables for a free giveaway to the central city's poorest residents. Their donations, weekly tipping the scales at 100 to 300 pounds, now have totaled more than 2,000 pounds.

Manuel and other volunteers from the Tenderloin Filipino-American Community Association and Tenderloin Chinese Rights Association pick up the produce and deliver it to the Barangay Tenderloin Community Center, 476 Eddy St., where it's weighed and

set out for distribution the next morning. Early spring produce such as oranges, apples, broccoli, cauliflower, onions and cabbage have filled the bins in recent weeks.

The program has about 200 regulars with up to 40 people lining up at 10 a.m. each Thursday, says Lorenzo Listana, TNDC community organizer.

"The residents pick out what they want," he says. "Depending on donations, we limit them to 5 to 10 pounds. And if there's any leftover produce, we bring it to the Crescent Manor apartments." Crescent Manor is Section 8 housing for seniors and the disabled.

The donation program is a win-win for everyone, says Kate Creps, farmers' market operations manager. It promotes the Healthy Heart of the City nutrition and education campaign and TNDC's Food Justice program, both launched to add healthy foods to the tables of residents who live in the Tenderloin's "food desert" with no full-service grocery store and few sources of truly fresh produce.

Not having to truck back unsold perishables isn't what motivates farmers' giving — they have to haul home tables, tents and boxes, full or empty, anyway, Creps says. Yet many set aside produce to donate that they might have sold.

"They want to help because they've spent so much time among these people and feel like part of this community," she says. "It's their way to give back to a neighborhood that's supported their small farms since the market started in 1981." Heart of the City is a rarity, she adds, a nonprofit run by its farmers and operated to keep direct marketing costs low so savings can be passed on to shoppers.

The donation program is expected to continue indefinitely, "as long as farmers are willing to donate and there are Tenderloin residents who need food," says Listana. ■



PHOTO BY MARJORIE BEGGS

Struggle to keep Filipino community intact

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response was not overwhelming. Six to eight maps were submitted, Lam says, including one from realtors and a map from the Bay Guardian.

The District 6 meeting was held in SoMa's Bayanihan Center Jan. 21 with an outpouring of residents who basically wanted their neighborhoods' "communities of interest" kept intact. Those in attendance knew what and who is important to their neighborhood, and they didn't want them gerrymandered out. The downside to splitting a community of interest between dis-

tricts, task force written material acknowledges, is that it could "frustrate efforts to obtain government support" by diluting political clout.

The loudest voice at the TODCO-owned Bayanihan (Tagalog for communal unity working to achieve a goal) was from Filipinos. More than a dozen spoke fervently about the need to keep the community together.

Filipinos settled South of the Slot in the 1920s, drawn by low-cost housing.

Now arts and veterans and other groups are active here. An example of the changing population is the enrollment at Bessie

Carmichael Elementary on Seventh Street, which has fallen from 85% Filipino 15 years ago to 50% today.

Weyland Jones, American Filipino Commission chair, suggested that a historic district be created to recognize the participation and contribution of Filipinos. Currently, a major public resource, SoMa's largest park is named after Victoria Manalo Draves, the Filipina record-breaking diving champion of the 1940s who won two Olympic gold medals.

What is now west SoMa has traditionally been the jumping-off place for Filipino immigrants who would settle there when they arrived, and stay till they could afford to move to the suburbs, often to Daly City and southward and the East Bay.

Several speakers, concerned about the northern boundary where dozens of residential hotels are on O'Farrell and Geary Street, wanted the SROs left inside District 6 because they are bound by common tenant issues. The March 22 map seems to leave these alone, but shoves a handful of SROs in the Inner Mission into District 9.

Corrine Woods of Mission Bay Citizens Advisory Committee pleaded against a dividing line east on 16th Street that would split the UCSF Mission Bay campus in half. Mission Bay has things in common with Rincon Hill and South Beach and should stay in District 6, she said. But in the current iteration, the area goes, intact, to District 10.

Chris Bowman, a former task force member, suggested a raft of moves, ending with sending Treasure Island and Yerba Buena Island to District 3. But that didn't happen.

"We thought there were too many programs that are part of District 6 operating there like the housing and job training," says Lam. "There's also the direct link with the bridge." ■

