

GOOD NEWS for...

TL HOMELESS The renovated Central City Hospitality House shelter, the city's smallest and one of the oldest, has reopened at 146 Leavenworth St. with the pristine glow of fresh paint, shiny floors and ADA-accessibility. The \$1.2 million makeover took a year and includes an elevator that operates from the basement to the second floor where the sleeping capacity remains 25 beds and five emergency mats. Outside is a spacious new deck. Downstairs are optional services such as counseling. Jenks said that Hospitality House had gotten a pass on ADA compliance over the years because the 1920 building was so old and the nonprofit had been there so long — since 1967. The shelter program was started in 1982 in response to increased homelessness when the feds drastically cut affordable housing funds. The shelter serves more than 720 men a year.

VETERANS Permanent supportive housing for formerly homeless vets stepped closer to reality with HUD's award in March of more than \$2.7 million to the city. The funds — 200 federally backed vouchers — will provide vets with rental housing through the Housing Authority as well as support the Veterans Commons housing project at 150 Otis St., a planned home for 75 homeless and senior veterans to live independently with on-site case management and support services from Swords to Plowshares and SF VA Medical Centers. The award covers one-year funding. Swords to Plowshares estimates nearly 1,100 vets are among the city's 6,445 homeless.

JOB-SEEKERS New computer stations, software and server upgrades, and a classroom projector are among the additions to the Positive Resource Center's computer training lab at 785 Market St., improvements made possible by a \$50,000 technology grant from AT&T. The center, serving people with HIV or AIDS since 1987, provides counseling, education and training with a strong focus on improving clients' chances of finding a job, even if they have a chronic illness, disability, are homeless, abuse substances or have been in jail. Among the center's 2,200 clients, 900 use the employment services, and 1 in 4 finds a job, says Leigh Illion, managing director of development. Being proficient on Word and/or Excel programs are required for most jobs. With the AT&T grant, the center bought the latest MicroSoft Office suite as well as ZoomText, a program for the visually impaired, and Nuance Speak & See, a software suite for speech recognition and text-to-speech adaptation. Since the upgraded lab's grand opening April 4, 10 new students have signed up for computer classes, which are open only to clients registered in the center's Employment Services program. Info for registration and class schedules: positiveresource.org/computer_training.asp.

If you have some good news, send it to tom@studycenter.org or marjorie@studycenter.org



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

The handsome Grant Building anchors the southeast corner of Seventh and Market. The landlord's heavy hand, helped by the long arm of the law, made working in the historic building's last days cold and miserable.

Tale of greed and disrespect in liberal landmark's last days

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Johnson's wife, Simon's mom, is on Larkin Street's board, a connection at least the men in the family say they expect to result in a steady source of entry-level hostel workers — a boon for the kids, a bonus for the Johnsons.

But if Study Center's unfortunate experience as a tenant of the Johnsons is any indication, the troubled youth will be working for employers who are unequivocal in their disrespect for behavioral health clients and those who serve them.

With Study Center for many years have been the Office of Self Help and S.F. Mental Health Clients' Rights Advocates. OSH is a Tenderloin wellness and recovery center, and MHCRA is San Francisco's state-mandated advocate for mental health clients.

The people they serve are clients of the city's Behavioral Health Services, whose privacy is protected by federal HIPAA rules.

Yet, under a host of remarkably rigid building rules, the Johnsons' security guards would require photo ID along with sign-in and destination for admission to the building. Not so unreasonable, if you're the Federal Reserve Bank, but after 35 years with flexible landlords, this felt like harassment.

One guard, Pavlik Bagdasaryan, frequently wrote down certain clients' personal information from their ID, would refuse entry upon whim, clearly snub African American clients and once followed a client he suspected of being drunk upstairs to OSH's group room and walked around the man, sniffing like a cadaver dog searching for the scent.

When I complained in a letter to son Simon, pointing out the privacy violations and asking that his guards respect our staff and clients, he replied testily via email:

"We (1095 Market LLC) are not a medical facility, we are a commercial office building" and HIPPA "does not apply."

What might happen when troubled youth from the city's nonprofit safety net are hired by the Johnsons to clean the toilets, bus the tables, make the beds and wash the dishes?

Some certainly will be receiving human services. Recovering from physical or mental illness or not, will their confidentially be respected?

Simon advised me to put a leash on Roy Crew, feisty director of OSH who resisted Bagdasaryan's infringement on his clients' rights. He warned in his email reply to my letter that Crew would be banned from the building.

One Friday in August, I arrived at work to find two cops in OSH's second-floor offices trying to get Crew to leave because the landlord wanted him 86ed from the building. Roy wasn't budging.

When I asked what Roy had done, one officer said he didn't know, but told me: "If the landlord doesn't like how you part your hair and wants you out, then out you go." But, without Roy committing an actual offense, someone had to make a citizen's arrest, the pair from Southern Station said, adding: And, if Crew returns and the landlord wants him out, he'll be arrested for trespassing.

Simon didn't want to make the arrest himself. But the morning security guard, Josif Bushler, was willing, protesting all the while that he was Roy's friend.

Out Crew went, and out he stayed.

For more than three months, landlord Simon Johnson, with the assistance of Superior Court Judge Harold Kahn — who recently rejected suspended Sheriff Ross Mirkarimi's request to be paid — kept this longtime behavioral health service provider from entering his place of work and performing his job duties under normal conditions.

Judge Kahn rejected our request for a preliminary injunction so Crew could return to work while we duked it out with the Johnsons in court. He ruled that it was a basic landlord-tenant dispute, unworthy of a busy jurist's time. His rejection of our brief was a win for the Johnsons. They knew they were in the driver's seat.

From the outside, Crew was able to regularly meet with his staff and clients, direct services, schedule programs and otherwise perform his many duties because his staff of committed professionals pulled

together. They kept OSH delivering its wellness and recovery services as if Roy had not been wrongfully banned. But how inconvenient and stressful for all involved.

Aside from the personal satisfaction that their mean crackdown on Roy must have afforded the Johnsons, the significance to the bottom line for 1095 Market Street Holding LLC of Study Center staying to the end of its lease — five months past CHP's departure — is not to be pooh-poohed.

One major tenant instead of two would drop the monthly rental income in half, yet building staff for security, janitorial and general maintenance could scarcely be cut.

So harassing Study Center staff and clients with unneeded front-desk rules, by not providing adequate heat to all of our offices, by driving up our legal bill, Market Street Holding stood to save six-good-figures if we would leave the same time as Community Housing Partnership, letting them shut the building down five months early. It worked.

The landlords sent us packing, demanding that Study Center leave the building spic and span.

We did. On final moveout day, Simon, who personally inspected the condition of our suites, was effusive, saying no other tenant had left their quarters so clean.

At the end of the inspection, we came to the final nook, the trash closet. In it stood a neatly wrapped 6-foot roll of window blinds, maybe 15 pounds.

Simon said he'd have to charge us to have this last piece hauled away.

How much?

\$50.

Obviously, every dollar counts when you're rich.

I walked away with the blinds over my shoulder, never looking back.

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The Johnsons not only trashed the Study Center. They are gutting a landmark of progressive San Francisco, a historic staging area for social action and human services unlikely to be seen again. ■

San Francisco Study Center publishes Central City Extra.