

Free toilet paying off: Use soars

CBD's experiment brings relief, less waste on street

BY TOM CARTER

THE first big success in the Tenderloin CBD's campaign to staunch rampant outdoor peeing and pooping in the neighborhood comes from the humble little john that could — and did — throw its door open to the public.

The Rescue Mission bathroom, open weekdays, is averaging more than six times the flushes it got last year. One busy month recently, it averaged 11.5 uses every hour. Over a three-month period in 2011, when the pilot began, the average was 11 uses for the whole day.

Seeking what impact the enhanced use might have on human waste in the street, The Extra asked the San Francisco Clean City

Coalition, which sweeps the CBD's 29 blocks of sidewalks and gutters, for comparative data over a similar (but four-month) period. The CBD paid for the mission's toilet to open up to the public and has seeded a compostable loo, too.

The total number of incidents of human waste and urine that Clean City reported January through April was 1,080; last year's total was 1,335.

"It appears there's been about a 20% decrease in the total reporting of incidents compared to 2011," said Gia Grant, executive director. "As always, there are several things to consider and I definitely believe that increased access to restrooms, such as the Rescue Mission, makes a difference."

"Weather also has an impact on the numbers because there are a lot more people on the street when the weather is warm compared to when it is very cold or raining."

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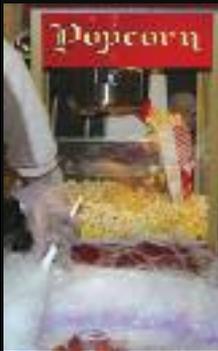
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CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

★ JACKIE JENKS ★



PHOTO BY TOM CARTER

Jackie Jenks has been at Hospitality House for 17 years. She arrived at the historic nonprofit a year out of college, and over the years has been schooled in the neighborhood of hard knocks.

EVOLUTION OF A LEADER

Hospitality House head has grown up in her role

BY TOM CARTER

IT WAS an unlikely day 17 years ago when Central City Hospitality House hired Jackie Jenks, a demure young woman, white, a journalism graduate a year out of college and unsure what she wanted out of life, certainly a stranger to poverty and the miseries of homelessness.

Yet there she was in the middle of the brooding Tenderloin. Too rough, her friends in the East Bay where she was living had said. Stay out of it. But, having finished a year with VISTA training volunteers at the Alameda County Food Bank in Oakland, the U. of Dayton graduate was set on following up a Hospitality House ad in the Chronicle that intrigued her. Social justice meant as much to her as writing.

Jenks took BART over, grabbed coffee at Carl's Jr. on U.N. Plaza and walked up Leavenworth, "maybe a little overdressed" from another interview, she recalls. Wearing heels and a skirt, she raised eyebrows and a whistle or two.

A panel of eight interviewed her and asked hard questions, she says. Understandably, they had doubts about her in the neighborhood. Would she feel safe? How'd she feel if the street people she was to serve rejected her?

Jenks left with a sinking feeling. But at home a telephone message was waiting. They wanted to schedule a second inter-

view. Days afterward, Kate Durham, the executive director, hired her.

"She was young, young, young," says Durham who works now with Beyond Emancipation, a nonprofit serving Oakland foster youth. "But she was incredibly smart, fearless and dedicated to community-rooted work. Her determination was clear in the interview. We wanted her to help with employment but we didn't have a lot of resources. We were asking her to make magic happen and it didn't bother her. I was impressed. She was ready to make adjustments."

"It's the best hire I ever did. I say that to this day."

Jenks has gone on to become a pillar of the underserved TL community. Now in her 11th year as Hospitality House executive director, she works with a \$3.3 million budget and oversees four major programs that affect thousands. She's earned a reputation for getting things done in dire times, and doing it with inspiring optimism, a cool head and a steady hand. A staff of 45 helps her turn the wheels. The vast majority were Hospitality House clients.

From City Hall to the state Capitol Jenks is known as a fearless advocate for the homeless and low-income.

"But her real work is behind the scenes," says her friend Jennifer Friedenbach, Coalition on Homelessness executive director. "She has this amazing commitment to look out for the Tenderloin community. And she's a leader who follows the people, modest and not someone who seeks the lime-light."

In summer 2010, the Human Services Agency wanted to cut shelter stays from 90 days to a maximum seven with two

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PHOTO BY TOM CARTER

Hyphae Lab founder and compostable toilet-maker Brent Bucknum examines the survey map showing where TL businesses said yes to a request to use the bathroom.