

Buying local is biggest benefit from tax break

Yammer, Twitter, others claim nearly \$3 million in food

By MARK HEDIN AND GEOFF LINK

THERE'S A CENTURIES-OLD saying about the need to feed soldiers: "An army marches on its stomach." And that's still true today in mid-Market, recently invaded and occupied by thousands of hungry tech workers.

Almost 3,000 are employees of the six tax-break companies — 1,500 at Twitter, 800 at Yammer, 200 at One Kings Lane, 163 at Zoosk, 250-plus at Zendesk and a smaller number at 21Tech, all with million-dollar payrolls. To get the tax break, they have agreed to provide a range of benefits to the neighborhood, including a pledge to purchase from neighborhood purveyors.

So far, restaurants and caterers are the main beneficiaries, according to the

first reports on file with the city administrator's office. The reports are to be filed quarterly. These first reports were to cover activities January through April. The reports arrived in July. Two make claims of extravagant spending during this period.

Yammer reports it spent \$2 million with caterer Green Heart, which operates out of a kitchen at 350 Golden Gate Ave. That's the biggest single expenditure listed in any of the first-quarter CBA reports, Twitter's \$750,000 on food a remarkable, but distant, second.

Twitter has its own kitchen and buys groceries from food distributors of which there are few in Central Market. Its report on company spending that benefits the inner city says Twitter spent six figures on food, 90% of it from "no more than 50 miles away," implying that purchases in Redwood City somehow benefit this community.

Within that distance, Twitter spokeswoman Karen Wickre named two coffee distributors elsewhere in the central city that the company does business with, and four other food distributors in San Francisco, plus others outside the city. One local business is Philz Coffee, with locations across from the old Federal Building and in the 700 block of Van Ness. Workers there asked not to be identified, but confirmed that the tech influx has been good for business.

"These code writers are up all night," another said. "It's the closest thing to legal crack," he laughed, adding that he believes someone in the company had a personal relationship with Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook — Philz Coffee has a location on the Facebook's Menlo Park campus.

The other company in the neighborhood that Wickre said Twitter buys from is Sightglass on Seventh Street.

"When buying in volume — say, meat, fish and produce," Wickre emailed *The Extra*, "it's difficult to find the vendors in the immediate neighborhood for our volume of business."

Neither Wickre nor the city administrator's staff explained how spending out-

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CENTRAL CITY

EXTRA!

SAN FRANCISCO

40TH ANNIVERSARY



At the Gangway on Larkin Street, Landa Lakes, a.k.a. Miko Thomas, Grand Duchess 36, poses with Kenya Pfister, a.k.a. Ken Harper, Royal Crown Princess, as they await the deadline for applicants who will vie to reign over the ducal court charity.

The queens' charity

Duke, Duchess benefit marks major milestone

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TOM CARTER

THE FUNKY, CENTURY-OLD Gangway on Larkin near Geary was a site for all eyes on a Sunday afternoon in mid-August when glittering drag queens and gay men applied to vie to be Grand Duchess and Grand Duke for the coming year.

Winning means a ton of work as fundraising chairpersons. The anointed royalty choose a court — their assistants — to help them raise money for charities they select. AIDS Emergency Fund has been a common recipient over the years. But so has help to other nonprofits and to individuals for special projects.

Before this 40th anniversary ducal year is out in September, and a new court is chosen with their handsome royal titles, more than \$50,000 will be distributed.

A few queens and their supporters lingered on the sidewalk, hugging and cooing over each other's finery before going inside just after 4 p.m. Aug. 18 when the application filing opened. Wide-eyed tourists in open air buses going up Larkin Street on a perfectly warm afternoon waved as they passed, not altogether certain what they were seeing.

The Gangway, one of the oldest gay bars in town, claiming a 1910 birth year, was packed and was loud and muggy. Most of

the men weren't in drag, only those vying to be Grand Duchess, members of the current court, or past winners — a dozen or more.

Near the doorway, Kenya Pfister is dressed in high heels, a tight, lemon-yellow sequined dress — "short," she points out — topped by a delicate white lace bolero jacket. She has a powdered face and blue eye makeup touched off with dangling, 4-inch silver earrings. Even if you knew this lovely person and your life depended on it, you could not guess this is Ken Harper, contracts administrator and human resource manager for the Tenderloin nonprofit, the San Francisco Study Center.

"I'm not running for Duchess, though some have asked me to," Harper says. "But this year I am the Royal Crown Princess, a member of the court. And if the Duchess can't perform her duties for any reason, I am the one who is supposed to step in and handle that."

The reigning Duchess has the musical name, Paloma Volare St. James, and is otherwise known as Daniel Fortuno. In this milestone year of royal fundraising, the court's \$50,000-plus was typical, suggesting that over the decades the ad hoc charity could have pulled in \$2 million. But absent a paper trail, no one knows.

"I've been involved four years," Fortuno says. "It was because of Landa Lakes. She was Grand Duchess ..." He stops in midsentence, leans toward the door and yells inside, "Landa! 36?" He nods, "Yes, the 36th year. She basically convinced me to get involved."

It was about the time Fortuno won the Royal Bunny contest at the Cafe Floré on Market Street, another fundraiser that netted \$8,000.

Fortuno is Grand Duchess to Grand Duke

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