

# App created by Zendesk for Tech Lab aids homeless

## Link-SF connects those in need with shelters, services

By JONATHAN NEWMAN

**Z**ENDESK HAS CREATED a mobile app for homeless and the low income to find shelter, food, medical care, a shower and public access to a computer — 234 services in all, from multiples like Glide’s food, rehab and housing programs to a weekly food pantry for Tenderloin residents administered by Korean American Senior Service. The app even gives them distance and directions how to get to what they need from wherever they are in the city.

And they don’t need an iPhone. Any under-\$50 smartphone will do.

The app — Link-SF — connects more people to more help than ever. It could

even increase the cost-effectiveness of resources like shelters because the app tells which location has how many beds available, achieving a more even distribution of services. People can know where they can get a bed without trudging from place to place and to find out ahead of time how to register and apply for wait lists.

The success of the app — 2,700 site visits each month and growing — is also seen in the increasing demand for St. Anthony Foundation’s Tech Lab services. Last year, 100 people a day visited the lab — 36,000 visits — and that number is expected to reach 50,000 this year, according to Jessie Brierley, the Foundation’s communications associate.

Along with increased visits, the lab is seeing changes in how people access the Internet.

The Tech Lab surveyed clients in 2011 and learned a third used a smartphone, tablet or other hand-held device. Two years later, informal lab surveys pegged client hand-held users at nearly 45%, which Zendesk employees volunteering as lab tutors confirmed.

St. Anthony’s recognized that with such changes, its clients would benefit from having city agencies, nonprofits and charities’ human services online in one all-inclusive site.

Zendesk engineers stepped up. They could build a Website to do that, they said, but better yet, why not also make it mobile-friendly — an app — so people could access service information directly from their hand-helds? If the need is critical and the resources potentially life-saving, access shouldn’t be limited only to the hours when publicly owned computers are available.

Before tackling the mobile app, Zendesk software engineers, led by Kenshiro Nakagawa, canvassed the Metro PCS store at Mason and Market streets to check out the neighborhood’s hottest-selling hand-helds, not the most sophisticated and expensive.

The engineers worked a year to create the app’s underpinnings — the open source code — so that it would work with most new smartphones, the basic under-\$50 models that lack elaborate bells and whistles but still provide Web access.

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NO. 158

PUBLISHED BY THE SAN FRANCISCO STUDY CENTER

AUGUST 2015

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Architects praise design of park

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Premier TL event overview, lineup

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## SOMA OBITUARIES

Herman Dunbar, Thomas Galiata

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LISE STAMPELLI

Two new produce bins at Daldas attractively display the corner store’s healthy offerings.

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# CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

## TECH VS. TL



LISE STAMPELLI

The opulence of The Market that opened this year in the Twitter building affords a stark contrast to the city-subsidized revamping of the Tenderloin’s newest model corner store, Daldas, at Eddy and Taylor streets, now offering a modest array of fresh fruit and veggies.

# Corner store faceoff

## Markets on both sides of Market a study in contrast

By MARK HEDIN AND GEOFF LINK

**“F**OOD JUSTICE” — a buzzword for the needed access to wholesome, fresh foods for people with limited nutritional options — gains new definition with the contrasting corner stores that now serve both sides of Market Street.

In January, the \$4 million, 28,000-square-

foot supermarket called simply The Market opened in the Twitter building at the southeast corner of 10th and Market, across from the new NEMA apartments that rent for \$4,200 a month and up.

At the same time, the Tenderloin is getting its best shot at emerging from its historical food desert with the publicly financed greening of traditional mom-and-pops. The latest remake in what will become a string of updated stores, Daldas, has gotten an uptick courtesy of the Tenderloin Healthy Corner Stores Coalition.

Daldas, about 1,800 square feet of basics at Eddy and Taylor, near TNDC’s way-below-market-rate Curran House for low-income families, has converted to an oasis of healthy options displayed in new bins and on shelves that were provided through Supervisor Eric Mar’s 2013 Healthy Food Retailer Incentives Program ordinance. A branch of the mayor’s office and the Department of Public Health coordinate with the Tenderloin Healthy Corner Stores Coalition to encourage all 70 or so of the neighborhood mini markets to offer fresh, healthy food.

With an annual budget of \$60,000 to fund the program, Gloria Chan of the Mayor’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development said her department finances physical renovations with “up to \$15,000” for the effort on any given store. DPH handles admin and expert consultations, the Coalition community outreach.

So the incentive to bring those mangos, ginger, tomatoes, apples, bananas, cucumbers, tomatoes, potatoes, lemons, onions, garlic, peppers, lettuce, grapes and the occasional watermelon to the front of Daldas’ busy li-