

Merchants, tech meet to bridge wide digital divide

Pioneering SoMa fund sponsors monthly trainings

By MARK HEDIN

IN AN EFFORT to link local tech expertise with local brick-and-mortar businesses, Urban Solutions is offering a series of free get-togethers for the two.

"Big Tech for Small Biz," supported by the South of Market Community Stabilization Fund, is the latest effort to bridge the digital divide, using the tools of technology to help businesses keep up and, hopefully, get ahead.

"It's the equivalent of having a 14-year-old around to help you with your smartphone," said Urban Solutions Executive Director Liza Zahner.

Some of the companies that made presentations in the initial sessions were Google for Business, which focused on the advantages of doing business in the cloud; Quickbooks and Xero, competitors in the accounting business; NerdWallet, which assists in developing business plans and provides a portal to Kiva, the micro-loan maker; Evernote, Scannable, Air BnB and Yelp.

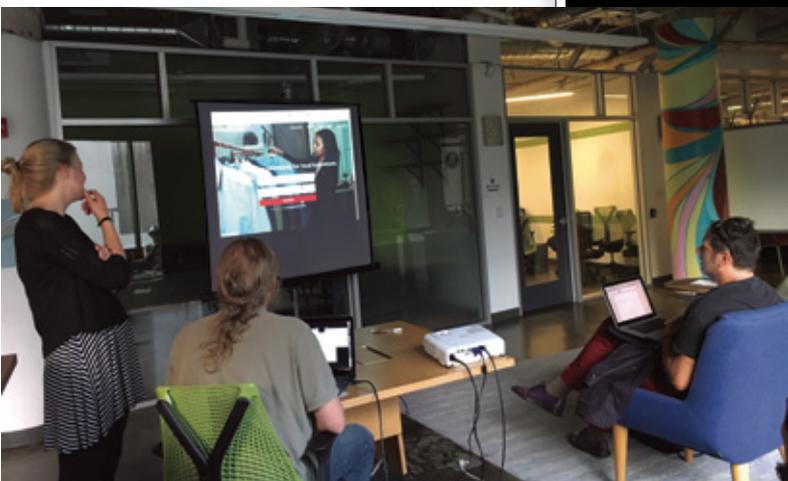
Wells Fargo and First Republic Bank also participated. Zahner points out that Wells' "competitive intelligence" database is free to all through the bank's Website.

Someone thinking about opening a coffee shop, she said, could get a snapshot of their local competitors and other info by neighborhood.

Urban Solutions has also brought in Hack the Hood, Weebly, Centro Community Partners, Twitter, Vehicle SE, Square and Townsquared.

The first session in the current series focused on developing a business plan. This month it's marketing and branding, and in November participants will learn about building a Website, Zahner said. The sessions are held on the third Thursday of the month from 6 to 8 p.m. at Impact Hub, 901 Mission St.

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FRANCESCA ROSSO URBAN SOLUTIONS

Urban Solutions' Sept. 15 workshop covered business planning topics. Pictured from left at the session: Wera von Wulfen from Townsquared, DJ Healy from Centro and attendee Steve Indig.

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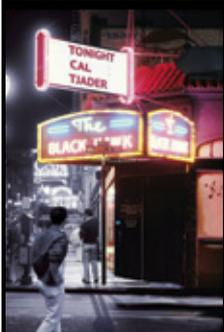
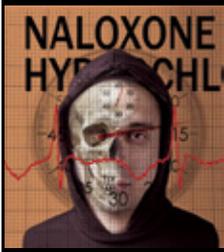
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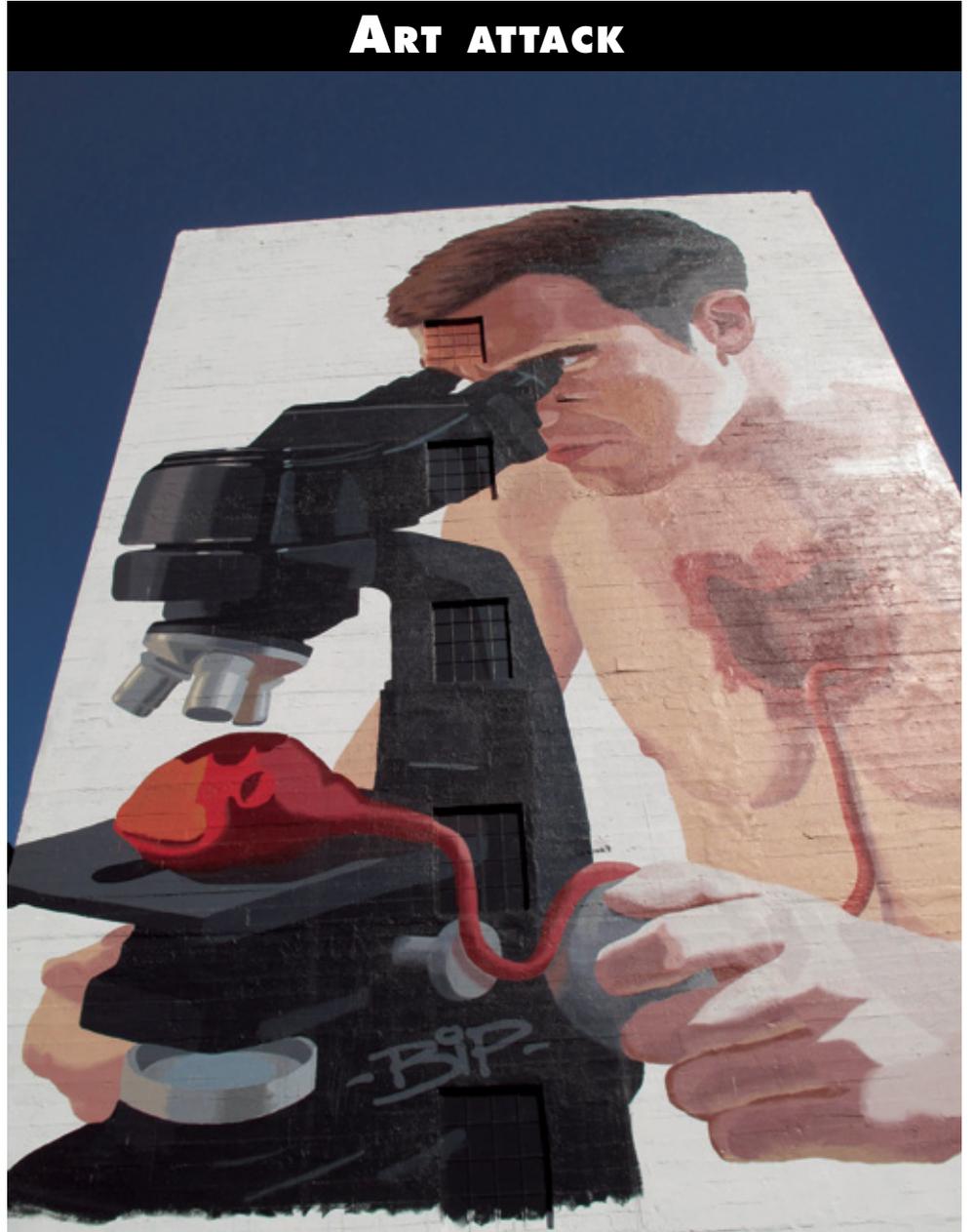


CENTRAL CITY

EXTRA!

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ART ATTACK



This five-story image by Tenderloin artist BiP depicting the ultimate in self-absorption that went up on the hostel at 685 Ellis St. is part of a citywide trend. Other examples are the DISH mural overlooking Boedekker Park, "Everyone Deserves a Home," and "Octopus" on the exterior of the new youth literacy center at Leavenworth and Golden Gate.

Wall art on the rise

Huge new murals in Tenderloin join city art trend

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JONATHAN NEWMAN

DISH — Delivering Innovation in Supportive Housing — threw a nice party to celebrate the completion of a vast, six-story mural on the side of the Windsor Hotel overlooking the Boedekker Park Clubhouse.

A happy crowd of neighbors, park habits, schoolchildren, city and DISH administrators, photographers and artists massed Sept. 7 in the midday warmth under a bright sky, admiring the depiction of a mighty tree whose branches bear fanciful San Francisco Victorians and simple Craftsman cottages all in brilliant psychedelic shades of blue, yellow, orange and green.

Entitled "Everyone Deserves a Home," the mural, largest this side of the Inner Mission's Women's Building, joins a roster of wall art cropping up all over the city.

Last year, in the Tenderloin, the graffiti artist BiP completed a stark, five-story rendering of a man examining his own heart under a microscope, entitled "Self-Consuming Self," on the back of the HI USA hostel at 685 Ellis St. And recently a soothing wave of aquatic life, entitled "Octopus," was unveiled at Leavenworth and Golden Gate, the newly opened branch of 826 Valencia Center, dedicated to improving the writing skills of neighborhood youth.

Mike Bellinger and Joseph Britton, part of the American Indian chant group All Nations, kicked off DISH's party with an honor song. John Waddy joined in, the beads and bones tied to his walking stick clicking the beat. Many in the crowd held hands in a round dance, circling happily. "The honor song and the round dance are ways the Native Americans show love for what has been created," Britton said.

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