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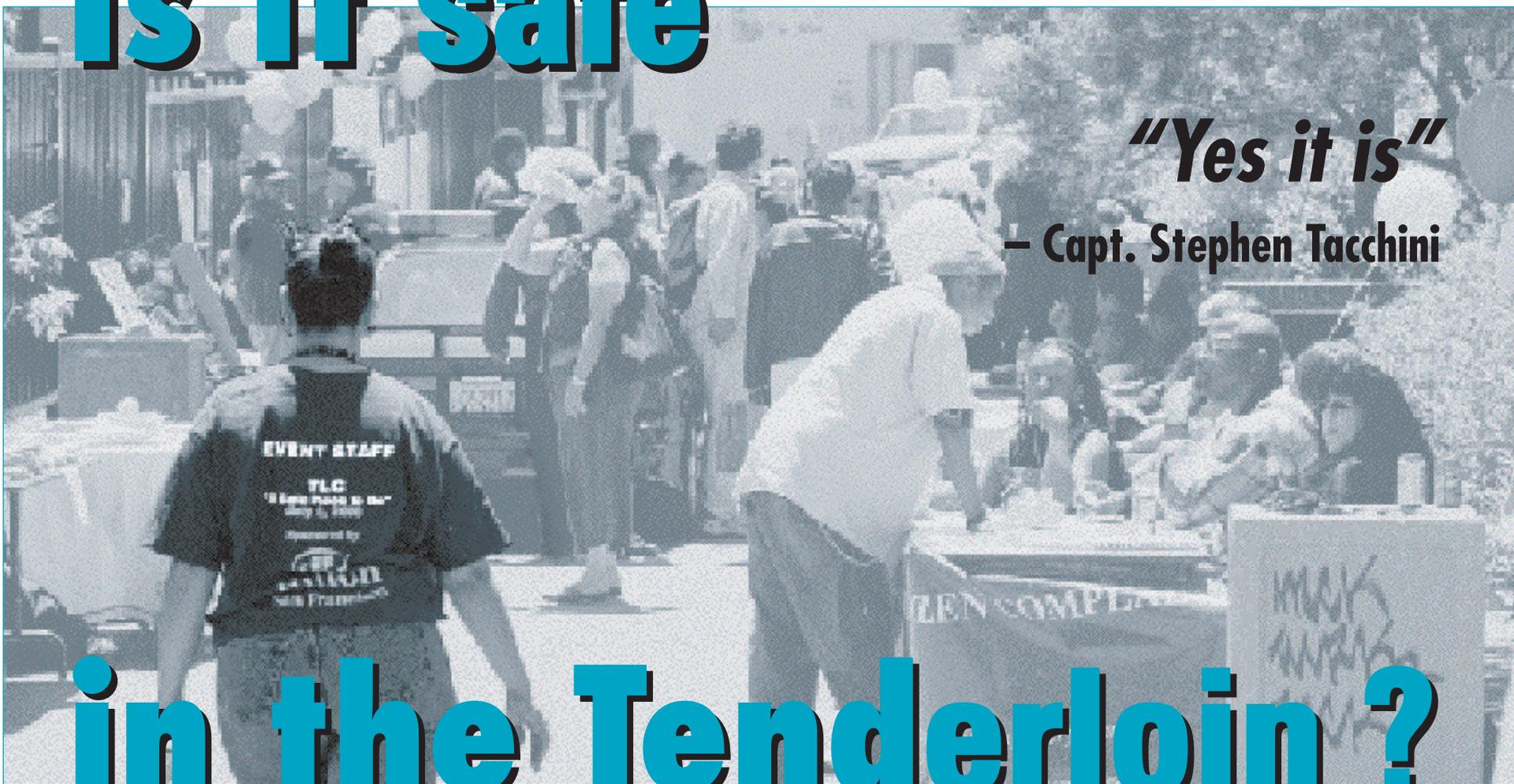
AVT 02 Central City

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The adventure continues

Is it safe



"Yes it is"

— Capt. Stephen Tacchini

in the Tenderloin?

The Boeddeker Park walkway was lined with tables manned by neighborhood activists touting their issues to throngs of interested residents.

PHOTO BY ADRIAN D. VARNEDOE

A day of music, workshops celebrates neighborhood security

On a July day when rain was expected in San Francisco, approximately 700 people showed up as the sun broke through the clouds to attend Adopt-A-Block's 3rd Annual Safety Fair at Boeddeker Park.

"TLC: A Safe Place To Be" was a day of safety workshops, neighborhood guided tours and other security activities to promote safety and unity in the Tenderloin.

Among the organizations hosting workshops or staffing some of the tables lining Boeddeker Park's walkway that were piled with handouts, flyers, agendas, brochures, were the Alliance for a Better District 6, San Francisco Safety Awareness for Everyone (SAFE), the Department of Parking and Traffic (DPT), Youth With a Mission and Muni.

Additionally, representatives from SFPD's Tenderloin Task Force, Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corp., Coalition on Homelessness, the Neighborhood Emergency Response Team, plus representatives of the city departments that participate in the Code Enforcement Task Force – city attorney's office, Public Health Department, police and fire departments and the Department of Human Services – all participated in various Safety Fair events.

"It's great, we should have this every week," said an enthusiastic Rudolph Ruff as he paced amid the hubbub.

The message of how to be safe at home and on the street was delivered primarily through a series of workshops held at nearby hotels with topics of interest to pedestrians, bicyclists, seniors, homeless, offering tips on street security, code enforcement and much more. A workshop at 249 Eddy St., hosted by SAFE, offered demonstrations on home and personal safety. Attendees were given tips on minimizing their susceptibility to being robbed on the street, and on how to safeguard their homes against burglars.

Women on the street were advised to hold their purses tightly under their arms, to keep keys and wallets in separate places, so that if, for instance, a backpack or purse were to be taken, the thief would not gain access to the victim's house, keys, ID, address information, credit cards, family photos and who knows whatall.

Various opinions were offered on the best way to walk through a dangerous neighborhood, because body language can send a message. SAFE Workshop presenter Irina Chatsova suggested walking in the middle of the sidewalk, staying aware of surroundings, and making eye contact with others on the street.

"Criminals are good psychologists, and they know how to spot a target," Chatsova said. "You want to tell them, I am not a victim."

But some TL old-timers say that making eye contact creates an energy exchange that

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by Angie Miraflor, Adrian D. Varnedoe and Jeremy Harness

SFPD data confirm trend

The Adopt-A-Block Safety Fair claimed that the Tenderloin is "a safe place to be." Sure, that's true for the street-savvy. But what about for the rest of us?

The Extra checked it out and learned that indeed the neighborhood has little more than its share of crime. With 4.3% of San Francisco's population, the Tenderloin in 1999 reported just 5.3% of the crime in the city.

Tenderloin Task Force Capt. Stephen Tacchini, when asked whether the neighborhood is safe, replied tersely: "Yes it is." Then he went on to explain.

CRIME STATS FALLING FAST

by Stan Hutton and Geoff Link

"We're finding that a lot of crimes are narcotics-related and the crimes are committed against whoever is buying or

selling. The average person going about their business has no problem," Tacchini said.

And other police statistics also back up Adopt-A-Block's assertion.

Numbers grubbed from the SFPD Web site show that crime in the neighborhood is following the nationwide trend as well as the statistical fall throughout the city.

Overall crime in the Tenderloin dropped in 1999 by nearly 6% from '98, which didn't quite keep up with the citywide numbers, which were down 8% from '98. However, this year, the Tenderloin rate is descending more than twice as fast as the statistics are falling citywide: Through May it was down 15% in the neighborhood, 7% citywide.

Neighborhood murders in 1999 dropped 50%, from six to three. This year, through May, only one of the city's 15 homicides was committed in the Tenderloin.

Rape is holding steady this year, with five through May compared with 12 for all of 1999. The big drop came last year with rapes averaging one a month; in 1988, there were nearly three rapes every two months.

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