

GOOD NEWS for...

ANYONE 60 OR OLDER who is depressed, stressed or wants help coping with medical, physical or family problems: UCSF is offering free individual counseling as part of a study funded by the National Institute of Mental Health. "We know that cost often is a barrier to getting health care," said UCSF's Patricia Areán, one of the study leaders. "We are pleased to help those in the central city area who may be feeling sad, lonely and who might have trouble managing day-to-day activities." Participants not only will be helping professionals find better treatment for all older adults, but those who complete the therapy will be paid. Information: UCSF Over 60 Program, 476-7439.

BOEDDEKER PARK Back in April, we wrote about ParkScan, a high-tech pilot project in which teams of volunteers carrying handheld computers and digital cameras go into neighborhood parks to document their condition. The pix and info are transferred to a Web site and become the basis for practical site improvements. Hooray! Boeddeker has been selected as one of the 13 pilot sites, and now the Neighborhood Parks Council, the project coordinator, and the newly formed Friends of Boeddeker Park are looking for people who have a couple of hours a month to give to this innovative program. You'll be trained in how to use the equipment, so you don't need to be a computer nerd to participate. Check out the Web site www.sfneighborhoodparks.org. Want to get involved? Contact Sam Shaw, ParkScan outreach coordinator, 621-3260, or sshaw@sfneighborhoodparks.org.

LOW-INCOME RENTERS AND HOMEOWNERS It's time to get your 2002 income information together to see if you qualify for Homeowner and Renter Assistance. To qualify for the state program — it now pays renters a maximum \$347 and homeowners \$472 once a year — on December 2002 you must have been 62 or older, disabled or blind; and you must have paid \$50 or more a month in rent or else owned and lived in your own home, earned up to \$37,676 during the year, and been a U.S. citizen or legal alien. Because of budget cuts this year, Franchise Tax Board field offices won't help you fill out claim forms, but you can get phone help from volunteers between July 1 and October 15 by calling (800) 338-0505. The Web site, which has forms that can be downloaded as well as addresses of Homeowner and Renter Assistance volunteer sites, also is useful: www.ftb.ca.gov/individuals/hra/

— MARJORIE BEGGS

This column needs regular infusions. If you have some good news (no events, please), send it to marjorie@studycenter.org.

FUTURES COLLABORATIVE

St. Anthony's new tune hits neighbors as same old jazz

121 GOLDEN GATE AVE.

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

People coming to the June 11 Tenderloin Futures Collaborative meeting at St. Anthony's Foundation heard lovely classical music — Haydn perhaps? — wafting across Golden Gate Avenue.

"The music is to deter folks from loitering, and it works," Father John Hardin, St. Anthony Foundation executive director, told Collaborative members who stuck around for a special post-meeting lunch and presentation on St. Anthony's plans to raze 150 Golden Gate, erect a new five-story building on the site, and renovate the existing dining room at Golden Gate and Jones.

The get-together was called to give project details and also to smooth ruffled community feathers. St. Anthony's says the renovation plans have been in development for years, but Tenderloin activists and neighbors say they knew nothing about the pull-'em-down, put-'em-up project until shortly before its first Planning Commission hearing in April. Not telling the people who live and work nearby about a multimillion-dollar project in the pipeline may be a sin of omission, but many see it as downright unneighborly, or worse.

St. Anthony's has been fingered for failing to provide sufficient security outside its dining room, where 1,000 people a day line up for meals, as well as outside 150 Golden Gate, where the St. Boniface Neighborhood Center leases the second floor as a shelter. Neighbors cite drug-dealing, public urination and defecation, assault and harassment — as well as pigeon-feeding down the block at the old Hibernia Bank building — as regular occurrences that the police have been unable to curb. And the culprits, neighbors concede, may not be St. Anthony patrons but rather unsavory characters who prey on them and other TL residents and business owners.

"You're responsible for the before and after of serving meals," Antonia Manor resident David Villa-Lobos said to Hardin. "We're here at this meeting because you can help take care of our concerns. The opposition to your plans will only get greater if you don't do something."

NEIGHBORS OVERWHELMED

"A nighttime security program is essential," added Shawn Collins, director of the Tenderloin Sidewalk Improvement Program. "And we need professional security — the neighbors are overwhelmed by the problems."

On cue, Lisa Baty from Mercy Housing said, "We call the police, and the people making the trouble are gone before they get here."

"I'm frustrated that this meeting didn't happen sooner," said Dennis Isner, member representative of the Northeast Community Federal Credit Union. "You have to take some responsibility — you can't just keep blaming the police."

Antonia Manor resident John Nulty had some final harsh words for St. Anthony's, citing the effect of having so many poor, vulnerable people lining the street every day. "You've been here 50 years and you haven't

solved the problems — you've made them worse. Residents are affected, and you've harmed businesses in the neighborhood because their customers don't want to come here."

In late June, Linda Pasquinucci, St. Anthony's service programs administrator, ran down the list of things they've done to ease neighbors' concerns. About those darn rats with wings — the dining room used to have bins of bread that people could take with them after they'd eaten their meal, but it often became lunch for the pigeons, Pasquinucci said. The bins are gone.

"We've done a couple of things to discourage loitering," she added. "We increased the wattage of the lights around the outside of the building, and just this week we posted no-trespassing signs in the windows. We've also moved the food line closer to the building so pedestrians can get by more easily and we're monitoring the line regularly for anyone who's harassing passers-by."

The corner of Golden Gate and Jones soon may be the cleanest in the TL. St. Anthony's was already power-cleaning its sidewalks. According to Collins, St. Anthony's has joined TSIP as a "fair-share member" as of July 1.

"That means they pay \$1 per linear foot per month of their frontage," Collins said. "TSIP will clean all the sidewalks around 121 Golden Gate as well as in front of 150 Golden Gate five days a week, plus once-a-month steam cleaning."

St. Anthony's has done a few more things to improve neighbor relations, Pasquinucci said: Besides presenting at the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative twice, it has met with NOMPC, with residents at 111 Jones and with managers at 201 Turk, and it hosted a neighborhood forum June 25 that drew about 20 residents.

SHELTER PROTEST

According to Tenant Associations Coalition Program Director Michael Nulty, St. Anthony's failed to show at an important meeting to talk more about the St. Boniface shelter.

Elaine Zamora, business owner at 118 Jones, resident activist David Baker, Villa-Lobos, Mayor's Disability Council member Ed Evans, Michael and John Nulty, and 132 Golden Gate property owner Craig Larsen had signed a June 2 letter to the DHS director of Homeless and Housing Programs protesting the opening of the shelter last year without notifying neighbors and nearby

property owners.

"We are writing . . . to ask that you review with us the procedural steps that enable St. Anthony Foundation to open this facility absent any community participation. If the destiny of the larger community is to be decided by a lone actor, then a corrective needs to be found."

Hardin had agreed to sit down with concerned neighbors on June 26, but he didn't show. "We met without him but were upset that nothing was accomplished," Michael Nulty said. "They sent a message that Father Hardin would be out of town for two weeks and suggested that we could put our complaints in writing. I think we're getting a snow job — now nothing can be resolved before the Planning Commission meeting July 17."

SOOTHE A SAVAGE BREAST

And what about that nice music?

"It was started it at the suggestion of Elaine Zamora, who found it effective in front of her business," Pasquinucci said. (The Renoir Hotel used to play classical music, too, to drive away people hanging out at its main entrance on Market and Seventh, but it seems to have stopped the practice since the McDonald's next door closed.)

St. Boniface's daily music wafts out of a speaker mounted outside 150 Golden Gate, Pasquinucci said. Inside, a staff member has the pleasant task of choosing which of several mostly classical CDs to play — to torment unwanted loiterers.

It's working, Pasquinucci added. "People aren't congregating like they used to." ■

POSTSCRIPT: TNDC's Katie Mullin, who has staffed the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative since its inception in September 2002, is leaving this fall to go to graduate school in New York. Assuming the reins will be Jerry Jai, who also will take over as TNDC's Façade Improvement Program manager.

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CENTRAL CITY



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