

First health clinic for supportive housing



PHOTOS BY LENNY LIMJOCO

Talking at the gala opening are David Nakanishi, director of the mayor's Homeless Outreach Team, and HUH Clinic Manager Judith Sansone.

238 EDDY ST.

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

THE Feb. 3 celebration — cake! speeches! flashbulbs! — fit the occasion: the official opening of Department of Public Health's Housing and Urban Health Clinic, the city's first new public health clinic in 20 years. It is in the heart of the Tenderloin, at 238 Eddy, on the ground floor of the Windsor Hotel.

The Windsor is one of 30 supportive housing hotels, the majority in the Tenderloin, whose 2,500 formerly homeless tenants can use the clinic for primary care and psychiatric treatment.

"We're the first clinic in the United States

that serves only people in supportive housing," said Dr. Josh Bamberger, medical director of DPH's Housing and Urban Health unit and director of the clinic. "We're also unique because we have a true integration of medical and psychiatric staff — a patient can be seen for both needs in one place."

The clinic has nine staff members: a family physician, an internist, a psychiatrist, two psychiatric nurse practitioners, three medical nurse practitioners and a physician assistant. They see patients five days a week; off hours, they make house calls to established patients at their hotels.

Nine of the 30 hotels are part of DPH's Direct Access to Housing program, which places formerly homeless adults — most with mental health, substance use and chronic medical conditions — in permanent supportive housing.

Sixteen hotels are Department of Human Services' master lease sites, and five are Health, Housing, and Integrated Services Network sites. HHISN is a collaboration of public and private agencies, funded by foundations, HUD, SAMHSA, state Department of Mental Health. It provides housing and social and health services to formerly homeless people with disabilities.

Beyond the clinic's bright, nicely appointed waiting room, the space is deep and narrow, two rooms wide. A long hallway separates the 15 rooms, four of them fully equipped examination rooms and the rest offices and consultation rooms.

Bamberger told The Extra that this may be the clinic's grand opening, but staff have been seeing patients since July and already are near capacity. "Last month we saw 600 clients — 300 unduplicated."

About 100 guests got a firsthand look at the clinic while they nibbled savories and ate cake, a yellow and brown confection that sported a

toy backhoe, dump truck and crane on an ersatz construction site, and the words, "Housing Is Health Care—Congratulations HUH." Sweet.

Schmoozing done, everyone squeezed into the waiting room

to hear speeches by Bamberger, DHS Director Trent Rhorer, DPH Director of Community Programs Barbara Garcia, and DPH Director of Housing and Urban Health Mark Trotz.



DPH Director of Community Programs Barbara Garcia gives kudos to Josh Bamberger, HUH clinic director.

Supervisor Chris Daly, called on to say a few words, opted out.

"To keep the people [in these hotels] housed," Bamberger told the crowd, "we have to be able to provide the services to keep them well. Staff can go to people's homes and then move them here to the clinic, if needs be."

"It's society finally living up to what it should do." He paused. "Will this cure homelessness? No, but we are moving forward."

Bamberger accepted kudos for another of the clinic's unusual characteristics: It's operating in the black, with an annual budget of \$800,000 supported by \$1.3 million in revenue, all from Medi-Cal billings. "We use only paperless medical records — we've moved into the 21st century," he said.

Among the many who showed up at the opening was Blanche Korfmacher, Community Behavioral Health Services' assistant clinical director for adult services.

"We had a client a few months ago who called us looking for help," she told The Extra. "We'd given him one referral and he wasn't happy with it — he lived in the Tenderloin in supportive housing, had medical and psychiatric challenges, and wanted something nearby." They referred him to the new HUH clinic.

Did the man report back on his experience? Korfmacher laughed: "The key is, he hasn't called us back. He got what he needed here." ■

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Civic Center Residence, 44 McAllister
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Le Nain Hotel, 730 Eddy
Pacific Bay Inn, 520 Jones
Star Hotel, 2176 Mission
West Hotel, 141 Eddy
Windsor Hotel, 238 Eddy

DHS Master Lease Hotels

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Arlington Hotel, 480 Ellis
CalDrake Hotel, 1541 California
Elm Hotel, 264 Eddy
Graystone Hotel, 66 Geary
Hartland Hotel, 909 Geary
Hillsdale, 51 Sixth St.
Jefferson Hotel, 440 Eddy
Looper Hotel, 875 Post
McAllister Hotel, 268 McAllister
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Hamlin Hotel, 385 Eddy
Lyric Hotel, 140 Jones
Rose Hotel, 114 Sixth St.