

# What you get at Tenderloin drop-in centers



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

**A reason James Gibson (left) has been coming several times a week to Spiritmenders since 1990 is "they don't play power trips." Program director JoAnn Thomson checks in "members" at the reception desk.**

**Medical assistant Zaida Oregel gives mandatory TB tests at the McMillan Center to clients seeking shelter through CHANGES, the city's computerized reservation system.**



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

extend to 8:30 p.m. It is closed at noon for an hour.

## TENDERLOIN SELF-HELP CENTER

This drop-in center opened in 1986, a neighborhood pioneer of the peer-based, self-help concept. The idea was that the homeless may not need doctors and psychiatrists — they could help each other to get what they needed, but only when they said they were ready. Hospitality House's center at 290 Turk, open weekdays 7 a.m.-7 p.m., can be a place to get out of the rain, rest, use bathrooms and showers, have coffee and snacks, even check e-mail.

But it also offers referrals to medical help, counseling, support groups and employment training. On Wednesday afternoons, the center distributes bags of groceries from the Food Bank. Up to 300 men and women come daily to the center. Some are repeats, but Executive Director Jackie Jenks estimates 6,000 clients a year are unduplicated.

"We consider ourselves a community center," Jenks says. "Some people are housed and come here to connect. Some aren't. Some have mental health issues and feel they have nowhere else to go but here. Some have multiple barriers to employment. We don't push them. We give them opportunities."

Cubbyluv, a young cartoonist and writer, says he uses one of the center's four computers every day. "It helps me prepare to do something with my life," he says. "It motivates me, too, makes me work a little harder."

## SPIRITMENDERS

This client-run, community drop-in center is for homeless, SRO and low-income apartment dwellers and folks with psychological disabilities, some dually diagnosed with addictions. Founded in 1986, Spiritmenders moved to the Redstone Building basement at 2940 16th St. eight years ago. It, too, is a self-help pioneer, serving a population traditional programs cannot.

The center has a living room with television, coffee and snacks, comfy chairs and couches, and a conference room, small library and offices. It is open Mon.-Fri. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. and runs a movie every Friday afternoon. Monday through Thursday groups meet to talk about dual diagnosis, relapse and prevention, wellness and recovery. No psychiatrists needed or wanted.

Spiritmenders' center draws about 20 people a day, many of them regulars, according to Executive Director Debbie



**Under the ornate vaulted ceiling at St. Boniface up to 100 pew-nappers take daytime snoozes before returning to the street. Children from nearby DeMarillac school make them sandwiches during Lent, and floor supervisors can refer those who want help to TARC next door for services.**

Terlesky. Support over the years has come from grants from the San Francisco Foundation, Zellerbach Family Foundation, and the Tin Man Fund, with help from CBHS the past few years.

It's a membership organization that anyone can join, and staff and board are all mental health consumers.

## OASIS COMMUNITY CENTER

For 10 years, the Office of Self-Help operated Oasis as a drop-in center for most anyone in need who came in the door. But for more than a year the nonprofit Office of Self-Help at 1095 Market has targeted only mental health clients who come with letters of referral. In its mental health, peer-based program, it sees 15 to 25 clients a day, 75% repeaters.

Oasis is on the second floor of the Grant Building. "It's an opening gate for some clients," says Director Roy Crew. "They may hear about us word-of-mouth and get a referral to come here. We get them plugged in. For others, it's a closing gate. They're displeased with the system and come to us as an option. We want them. Some are looking for a second opinion."

City-funded, consumer-staffed and grounded in self-help, Oasis is open 11 a.m.-4 p.m., seven days a week, times that don't conflict with meals at Glide and St. Anthony's. A dual diagnosis group meets on Monday and Friday, a men's group Tuesday, an art group Wednesday, and Women's Day on Thursday. There's music, games, movies daily, and outings.

"Clients come from all walks of life," Crew says. "They vary from functional to dysfunction-

**"Some come in to sleep and some come to socialize. It's a room away from where they live."**

Nancy Houk  
LIVING ROOM MANAGER

middle. Living Room is open 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. and serves breakfast 9-10 a.m.

"Some come in to sleep," says Manager Nancy Houk, "and some come to socialize. It's a room away from where they live." Videos are shown at 1 p.m.

Of the 60 to 80 people who show up daily, most are men and 30%-40% are homeless, she estimates.

## RESCUE MISSION

The mission's Homeless Café at 140 Turk is a drop-in site where homeless people can eat, relax and get a bit of religion. From 10 a.m.-noon, Mon.-Fri., and on Sunday, free coffee and pastries are served to 60-80 people each day, according to staff. Many are regulars. They come and go, settling into the 17 pews in front of the pulpit expecting to hear at some point 10-15 minutes of devo-

PHOTO BY MARK ELLINGER

tions. At 4 p.m., there's a free hot meal with a gospel service that 40 to 80 attend. But the staff emphasize that the café is a place to rest.

Staff chaplains such as Earl Rogers may deliver the afternoon message, but teams from out of town who want to reach out to the homeless also come to encourage testimonials. Blankets and counseling are offered.

## GLIDE MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The walk-in center at Glide at 330 Ellis is for people seeking resources. It uses CHANGES, the shelter reservation system, and is not a respite drop-in center.

"We do a lot of referring internally," says Rita Shimmin, associate Glide director. Services range from child care to legal help, and employment training to outpatient treatment. There's even one-time financial help, up to \$1,000, to make a house payment. People can sign up for shelter, get clothing vouchers and pick up hygiene kits. The walk-in center, which began in 1977 as a crisis center, is open Mon.-Fri., 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m., and 2-4:30 p.m.

## MCMILLAN CENTER

This drop-in center at 39 Fell St. between Van Ness and Polk is open 24-7 except 9:30-11 a.m., when it's closed for cleaning. Funded by the Department of Public Health, it's run by the nonprofit Community Awareness & Treatment Services as a place where people can get off the street. Drunk, sober or otherwise, this entry point is a chance for them to connect with services that can help them, if they choose.

"It's all voluntary," says Executive Director Janet Goy. There are restrooms, washer and dryer but no food other than snacks. Medical services are available 24 hours a day. Three case managers are on hand Mon.-Sat., 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Up to 100 people show up daily — 1,200-1,400 unduplicated a month — according to Program Manager Willie Hall. The center is also a part of the CHANGES database for making shelter reservations.

The McMillan center opened 12 years ago as a program to prevent people from dying on the street. It aimed to get drunks into a care facility, not a jail's holding tank or hospital.

Now CATS' eight Mobile Assistance Patrol vans traverse the city and pick up and deliver clients to McMillan's year-old Sobering Center, also open round the clock and available to those who can get there on their own.

"Better here than ER," Goy says.



PHOTO BY TOM CARTER

## ST. BONIFACE CHURCH

The 100-year-old Catholic church at 133 Golden Gate offers its pews for sleeping, Mon.-Sat., 6:30 a.m.-2 p.m. At the end of the month, or during bad weather, up to 100 men and women snooze under the vaulted ceiling and stained glass windows, a space restored to its former splendor four years ago.

A staff member and volunteers keep the sanctuary secure and can direct people to social services elsewhere. Bathrooms are open.

"We've been doing this since last year," says Shelly Roder, director of St. Boniface's Neighborhood Center. "We want to make a connection with the homeless. People who don't want to go to a shelter or an institution come here. They feel protected and safe. Some might stay up all night and then come here. Only 30 to 40 are left by 2 p.m."

During the 7:30 a.m. and 12:15 p.m. daily Masses, the homeless move to back rows. When available, blankets are given out. During Lent, DeMarillac Middle School students next door offer the homeless sandwiches.

"Many visitors who are walking through are impressed by what they see and want to donate things," said Roder. "We suggest, socks, toiletries, sleeping bags, gloves, hats and scarves." ■

**Cartoonist and writer Cubbyluv, a regular at the Tenderloin Self-Help Center, says using a computer motivates him toward building a career.**

**Once a week, acupuncturist Dr. Yuan Wang offers free treatments to mental health clients at Oasis Community Center on Market Street.**



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO