

Cops, residents stymied by the new sidewalk encampments

TL police summit fails to solve this growing problem

BY TOM CARTER

TENDERLOIN police are so stumped for a solution to sidewalk encampments in the Tenderloin and the petty crimes and drug traffic they spawn that they called a summit meeting on Sept. 21 to ask TL residents for suggestions on how to lick the problem.

The residents turned out in force, but there wasn't a hint of a solution.

"The purpose was to get service providers and others to help in that Golden Gate Avenue corridor," Tenderloin Police Capt. Kathryn Brown said afterward. "I wanted their suggestions. But everyone was so focused on the police.

"It got people thinking, though, and we were on the same page when we left. With time, people will come up with ideas. I'd prefer they have the meeting, though. If the police are there, they become the focus."

Moreover, the common conjecture is that the encampments will get

way worse before they subside. Escalating the problem, some residents venture, will be the Sept. 29 closing of the 24-hour McMillan Center at 49 Fell St., a drop-in center which handled shelter reservations, and the mayor's recent efforts to move squatters out of Golden Gate Park.

"I haven't seen it this bad in the six years I've been here."

Sister Karen Kielb
PRESENTATION SENIOR
COMMUNITY

Free holiday meals and food giveaways are expected to attract more people.

The encampment and blocked sidewalk problems have existed near Tenderloin Health, the drop-in and services center for street people at Golden Gate and Leavenworth. It saw 6,000 unduplicated residents in 2004 and 13,000 in 2005. It added its line security employees in September.

Crime is challenging to be the

▶ **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



Encampments with rowdy crowds have sprung up on Ellis Street in the last three weeks.

NO. 61

PUBLISHED
BY THE
SAN FRANCISCO
STUDY CENTER

OCTOBER
2006



HALLOWEEN HAUNTED HOUSE

Good News for Tenderloin kids

PAGE 2

'WHAT I WILL DO FOR DISTRICT 6'

Supervisory candidates speak to the voters

PAGE 4

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

TNDC pool toss among special events

PAGE 8

CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

EMPRESS HOTEL



PHOTOS BY LENNY LIMJOCO

Open Mic night cued an outpouring of talent from the residents of the Empress Hotel.

Grassroots Revue

Tenants' talents in the spotlight in show at SRO

BY TOM CARTER

IT was fitting that Tina Knox sang the 1930s tune "San Francisco." When she was down and out, the city gave her a nice place to live in a cozy, made-over SRO that has support services for residents.

Knox was the first to perform before 30 residents at the Empress Hotel's first Open Mic night on Sept. 12 put on by the Eddy Street hotel's Tenant Council. The crowded Community Room off the lobby seethed with warm feelings and anticipation. Taquitos, mini bagels, guacamole and chips and drinks, compliments of the management, made the rounds. And if everyone didn't feel loved, they felt awfully appreciated.

Knox said Jeanette MacDonald made the song famous in a movie by the same name that ended with the 1906 earthquake.

"I love San Francisco," announced the big lady, then gave the song a hearty belt. It didn't matter that she mixed up some lyrics. Everybody felt the vibe, and they showered her with applause.

Randy Wilson, who handled introductions and helped organize the session, explained before Knox sang that the evening would show that "whatever we go through in life, we still have our talents" to display. And the show sprung it out from behind the doors.

The 90-room Empress is the SRO that Prince Charles visited last November. Renovated two years ago, it's the flagship of the Department of Health's Direct Access to Housing program for the homeless and destitute chronically ill. The residents, many dually diagnosed with addictions and mental problems, are surrounded with medical and support services.

The Prince of Wales spent more than an hour at the Empress, touring with his wife Camilla, the Duchess of Kent, and talking with residents. Impeccably mannered, the prince spoke individually with residents and inquired about addictions, kicking drug habits, sleeping outdoors and counseling.

The Empress was at the top of Prince Charles' list because he has a deep interest in finding solutions to homelessness. It also had a Brit connection.

About six years ago, a West Cork group of investors threw in with Empress owner Vijay Patel and the partnership plunked down \$2 million to renovate the neglected fleabagger. It had 58 rooms for tourists then and 30 for residential use. The Corkers wanted to attract Irish travelers like the Sheehan Hotel on Sutter did, and called it West Cork at one point. But after the job was done, the city ruled the tourist rooms had not been used in three years and that by law they, too, should become residential, agreeing with the point made by lawyer Randy Shaw who heads the Tenderloin Housing Clinic. The appeal was turned down and the West Cork group bowed out. The Extra's stories by Anne Marie Jordan in May and August of 2002 told the tale.

Now, the grassroots performers felt they were getting the royal treatment.

"Thanks for this," said baritone Rob

▶ **CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**