

# SRO residents' talents on display

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Rucker, who said he came from Milwaukee 25 years ago. "It gets us out of our rooms." In front of a 6-by-6-foot mandala wall hanging used this evening to cover a window, and while the ceiling fan spun above him, he sang the Johnny Mathis classic "Misty."

Master of ceremonies Dwight Saunders stepped in with high energy and tossed out some barbs that elicited guffaws and groans. After a lesbian carpenter joke — with a tongue-in-groove punch line — he confessed, "Okay, maybe I'm not funny, I'm lewd. And if you don't like an act, boo 'em off the stage. Okay, maybe that's going too far."

Saunders was joking. The idea was to get people to come together, to be fearless and emote, show a talent, read a poem, tell a joke, anything. And they

had coalesced nicely, thanks in part to the efforts of Randy Wilson, the tenant representative. Before the show, Wilson knocked on the tenants' doors to encourage each to participate.

Saunders reminded that not all the art was at the microphone. He referred to art work on a wall that was "very saleable." Hanging up for the show were impressively controlled oil, chalk, color pencil and watercolor drawings and ceramic clay art from six hotel artists.

## EMPEROR NORTON II

"I'm not a novice," said Norton Kolomeyer, a capricious elderly man and a medical doctor who also calls himself Emperor Norton II. The reference is to the 19th century businessman Joshua Norton who roamed the city proclaiming himself Emperor I of

North America and Protector of Mexico.

"I used to attend lots of poetry sessions in North Beach," Dr. Kolomeyer went on. "They were really tough, not a good audience like you. They were poets. And the only thing they had in common was poetry. You'd make them feel inferior."

He started talking about the history of poetry, poets as heroes, what it took to write the stuff — "an open, vacant mind" — before somebody yelled at him to can it and get on with the poetry. So he recited four he wrote.

The things residents revealed in art form, or free form, varied from descriptions of bleak existences and weaknesses, to hope and joy and love. About half sang.

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## A pressing police problem

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charges "almost all" of those arrested but there are "intervention" options for first-time felons, such as services and job training.

"Incarceration is not a priority in prosecuting drug dealing," she said.

On the other hand, the threat of state prison for a second offense is a tool in the fight against drugs, she said, and the DA's stay-away orders are "leverage" in the system, but "it's a revolving door in a lot of respects."

"I don't want you to think that we don't do anything," Woo said. "The price of doing business in San Francisco has gone up in the last 2½ years. Arrests on the street send a message. And San Francisco is turning the corner and is sending people to jail for parole violations."

But serious quality-of-life issues, plus drug dealing, remain a daily disaster for part of the neighborhood. As soon as police cleared away messy encampments on Golden Gate Avenue in September, more appeared on Ellis between Jones and Taylor, in the block where Glide offers food and services.

### RATS IN BOEDDEKER PARK

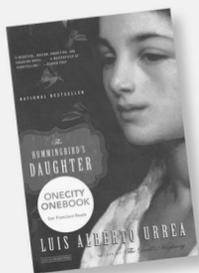
"I'm not anti-homeless but we seem to have the worst of the worst," said Kielb in an interview last month that included Presentation resident Dan Stein. "The police act very quickly, but then the problem is right back. There's no place for them to go. And the situation is no one's fault, not Glide's, the mayor's or the police. And I have no idea for a solution."

Stein said the squatters on the sidewalk at Boeddeker Park's closed north gate throw food into the park and climb over the fence at night to sleep there. Weeds have grown up. The park doesn't get the gardening attention it got 18 months ago, he said. The result, he said, is rats. Presentation residents using the patio that abuts the park fence have spotted rats coming from the park to the patio fountain for water. Presentation has two traps set at the fence.

Stein was part of the collaboration with St. Anthony's and Glide to put on ice cream socials for seniors at the park in 2004. But they were discontinued last year.

"We served hamburgers and it was overrun by street people, not the seniors it was intended for," Stein said. "We lost control. The last thing we had in the park was the arts festival a year ago. People are afraid to go in there now."

Labor Day weekend narcotics police used Presentation's roof as a lookout. They radioed patrol cars and several arrests were made on Ellis Street. ■



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