

## Ways to get it fresh

Dear Editor:

Thank you so much for your article on fresh food in the Tenderloin. It is good to know that a very basic necessity of life is given such good attention. Fruits and vegetables are medicine and if people have higher access to them, the neighborhood will indeed improve; not only because people are healthier if they choose to be but that more positive street presence will be encouraged as well. A good example of this (as you gave in your article) is the Farmers' Market in U.N. Plaza. It changes the entire energy of the place and provides MUCH needed resources for the individuals in this neighborhood.

I also enjoyed reading about LEJ's actions in Bayview Hunters Point. However, there are some aspects of providing fresh food in this area that you did not cover. One thing is a movement in West Oakland. They are trying to shift 20-30% of all sales in corner stores to fresh produce. I'm not sure what the status of this is. However, I do know that West Oakland has a diverse spread of food options because of the neighborhood's own ability to rally and face the challenge.

They have been able to take vacant lots and turn them into urban, mini farms (for example, City Slickers). They also have a van that rolls around the neighborhood and brings food to residents (it is run on biodiesel). The reason that the van (of People's Grocery) came into existence is because other vans were rolling through the community — Coca-Cola to be exact. They were giving out Coca-Cola to the kids in a community that had no access to fresh food.

I also did not read about another creative option — co-ops. As you can see Rainbow Grocery and Other Avenues have been in existence for about 30 years and are doing fine. If the community supported the creation of a co-op that employed local adults and youth, this place would be strengthened. People would learn more about food and themselves in the process of actually running a co-op. The co-op could start with fresh vegetables and fruit, whole grains, eggs, and dairy and soy products. It could then decide what other food items it would like to carry. This is the only model that will strengthen the community. And, it would be a big surprise to the entire city if it happened in the Tenderloin.

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## City will pick up hazardous waste free

*Toxics specialist spreads word about new law*

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

CYNTHIA Knowles from the S.F. Department of the Environment came to the July Tenderloin Futures Collaborative meeting with a positive message for residents about toxics: The department's program to help people get rid of hazardous household items, formerly gratis for seniors only, became free for all city residents July 1.

"Everyone's equal in this — home owners, apartment renters, SRO residents," said Knowles, the department's toxics reduction specialist. "But you do have to make an appointment — call 355-3777 — and you have to be home at the scheduled pickup time."

Even in a tight-spaced SRO, a resident is likely to have some of these hazardous materials: insect sprays, rodent poisons and baits, house plant insecticides, mercury thermometers, aerosols, hypodermic needles, bathroom cleaners, bleach, nail polish remover, fluorescent lights, lighter fluid, mothballs, batteries.

These shouldn't be tossed out with the garbage or poured down the drain, Knowles said. All need special disposal to protect the environment. The city contracts with Norcal Waste's S.F. Recycling and Disposal Co. to do the pickups.

On appointment day, the resident brings the items in, say, a cardboard box or bag, to the apartment or hotel entrance, and hands them to the driver.

"People who are elderly or unable to walk or carry heavy items should let the scheduler know ahead of time — they'll make special arrangements," Knowles said.

Knowles' only bad news had to do with prescription drugs, which used to be on the list of hazardous collectibles.

"Unfortunately, just three weeks ago, Norcal stopped accepting expired and used medications," she said. That leaves a critical hole in the program.

Last year, the Department of the Environment and others organized a Bay Area-wide two-day pilot with Walgreens Drug Stores to accept used and

expired meds.

To see if local Walgreens had continued on their own, The Extra called four in the central city. Only one pharmacist, at Geary and Taylor, said he still accepts dud meds but is rarely asked. The last time was four months ago. At the other stores, the pharmacists recalled the two-day pilot, but said if asked today, they couldn't accept used or expired meds.

After the meeting, one SRO-dwelling Collaborative member told The Extra he didn't think he could make an individual appointment for hazardous waste pickup because his building manager has such tight rules.

Knowles said her department would do everything it could to make the program work, including talking to managers, nonprofit developer-owners and tenant reps about organizing a whole-building pickup, if that's what it takes.

"The idea of general collection is great," she said. "It may be a function of reaching out to SRO managers, but from our point of view, it doesn't have to be organized — it can be individual."

The Extra asked Ron Hicks, TNDC's facilities manager, if his organization had any objection to tenants taking the initiative.

"Absolutely not," he said. "In fact, we're working with Department of the Environment right now to customize recycling collection for all our buildings, including pickup of hazardous household waste." Meantime, he added, individual initiative is appreciated.

In case it seems little things don't mean a lot when it comes to hazardous waste, consider the

old-fashioned, nondigital thermometer: It contains one gram or less of mercury. Environmentalists say that's enough to contaminate a 20-acre lake. A person who breaks a mercury thermometer risks breathing in and absorbing vapors that could cause neurological damage.

### FUTURES COLLABORATIVE GETS THE GREEN LIGHT

It's official, said Tomiquia Moss, TNDC community organizer and Collaborative recording secretary: "Folks are still interested in the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative and voted to continue it."

In May, she sent an email survey to 125 people who've attended TFC meetings recently. District 6 in SF message board carried the survey as well. Of the responses, 33 said TFC is "a valuable resource to the community"; 21 said it wasn't. Twenty-one also said they were no longer active in TFC, while 18 said they were.

Summertime meetings? Thirty-six were for them, 24 agin. And if meetings were held in the vacation-heavy summer months, 19 said they would attend; 21 wouldn't.

The meeting schedule — the second Wednesday of the month at 10 a.m. — still was okay for 30 respondents, but not for 20.

"Now we want to put together a steering committee," Moss said, "to decide future directions. And we want to thank Glenda, who's done a terrific job of keeping this informational and neutral."

Glenda Hope, S.F. Network Ministries executive director, has chaired TFC since its inception in October 2001. ■



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