

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SPECIAL EVENTS

Free Cadillac Concerts. Beginning Nov. 2, and through December, concerts are Fridays at 3 p.m. (formerly at noon), 380 Eddy. Information: 673-7223 ext. 2.

Film Festivals. 10th Annual San Francisco Asian Film Festival, Nov. 8-18, and the fifth Korean American Film Festival, Nov. 9-18. Various venues in the city. Information: www.eastraordinarycinema.com.

Mint Plaza opening ceremony. Fri., Nov. 16, 10 a.m.-noon, Jessie and Mint streets at 5th, a new quiet, green, clean refuge for art exhibitions, theater, live music, cafés, small festivals. Information: mintplazasf.org or 348-4604.

Insights, 18th annual juried exhibition by artists who are blind or visually impaired, through Dec. 7, San Francisco Arts Commission Gallery, City Hall, lower level. Presented by Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Information: 694-7370.

COMMUNITY: REGULAR SCHEDULE HOUSING

Supportive Housing Network, 4th Thursday of the month, 3-5 p.m., location TBA. Contact: Alecia Hopper, 421-2926 x302.

Tenant Associations Coalition of San Francisco, 1st Wednesday of the month, noon, 201 Turk Community Room. Contact Michael Nulty, 339-8327. Resident unity, leadership training, facilitate communication.

HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

CBHS Consumer Council, 3rd Monday of the month, 5:30-7:30, CBHS, 1380 Howard, Rm. 537. Call: 255-3428. Advisory group of consumers from self-help organizations and other mental health consumer advocates. Open to the public.

Health & Wellness Action Advocates, 1st Tuesday of the month, 5-7 p.m., Mental Health Association, 870 Market, Suite 928. Call: 421-2926 x306.

Healthcare Action Team, 2nd Wednesday of the month, Quaker Center, 65 Ninth St., noon-1:30. Focus on increasing supportive home and community-based services, expanded eligibility for home care and improved discharge planning. Light lunch served. Call James Chionsini, 703-0188 x304.

Hoarders and Clutterers Support Group, 2nd Monday and 4th

Wednesday of each month, 6-7 p.m. 870 Market, Suite 928. Call: 421-2926 x306.

Mental Health Board, 2nd Wednesday of the month, 6:30-8:30 p.m., City Hall, room 278. CBHS advisory committee, open to the public. Call: 255-3474.

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill-S.F., 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Family Service Agency, 1010 Gough, 5th Fl. Call 905-6264. Family member group, open to consumers and the public.

SAFETY

Safety for Women in the Tenderloin, every 3rd Wednesday, **Central City SRO Collaborative,** 259 Hyde St., 4-6 p.m. Informal, friendly environment, refreshments, gender sensitive to LGBTQ community and sex workers. Discuss how to make Tenderloin SROs safer for women. Information: Leanne Edwards, volunteer campaign coordinator, 775-7110, ex. 102.

North of Market NERT, bimonthly meeting. Call Lt. Erica Arteseros,, S.F. Fire Department, 970-2022. Disaster preparedness training by the Fire Department.

SoMa Police Community Relations Forum, 4th Monday of the month, 6-7:30 p.m. Location changes monthly. To receive monthly information by e-mail, contact Meital Amitai, 538-8100 ext. 202 or mamitai@iisf.org.

Tenderloin Police Station Community Meeting, last Tuesday of the month, 6 p.m., police station Community Room, 301 Eddy. Call Susan Black, 345-7300. Neighborhood safety.

NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT

Alliance for a Better District 6, 2nd Tuesday of the month, 6 p.m., 301 Eddy. Contact Michael Nulty, 820-1560 or sf_district6@yahoo.com. Districtwide association, civic education.

Boeddeker Park cleanup, 3rd Saturday of the month, 9-noon, organized by the Friends of Boeddeker Park. To RSVP to work or for information, Call Betty Traynor at the Neighborhood Parks Council, 621-3260.

Central City Democrats, meets four times a year, 301 Eddy St. Community Room. Addresses District 6 residential and business concerns, voter education forums. Information: 339-VOTE (8683) or centralcitydemocrats@yahoo.com.

Community Leadership Alliance. CLA Community Advocacy Commission monthly meeting, City Hall, Room 034. Subcommittee meetings and informational forums held monthly

at the Tenderloin Police Station Community Room. Information: David Villa-Lobos, admin@CommunityLeadershipAlliance.net.

Friends of Boeddeker Park, 2nd Thursday of the month, 3:30 p.m., Boeddeker Rec Center, 240 Eddy. Plan park events, activities and improvements. Contact: 552-4866.

Gene Friend Recreation Center Advisory Board, 3rd Thursday of the month, 5 p.m. Board works to protect SoMa resources for children, youth, families and adults. Gene Friend Recreation Center, 270 Sixth St. Information: 538-8100 x202

North of Market Planning Coalition, 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6 p.m., 301 Eddy. Call: 820-1412. Neighborhood planning.

North of Market/Tenderloin Community Benefit District, Call Elaine Zamora for dates and times, 440-7570.

SoMa Leadership Council, 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6 p.m., **The Arc,** 1500 Howard St. at 11th. Emphasizes good planning and good government to maintain a diverse, vibrant, complete neighborhood. Contact: Jim Meko, 624-4309 or jim.meko@comcast.net.

South of Market Project Area Committee, 3rd Monday of the month, 6 p.m., 1035 Folsom, between 6th & 7th. Health, Safety and Human Services Committee meets monthly on the first Tuesday after the first Monday, 1035 Folsom, noon. Information: 487-2166 or www.sompac.com.

Tenderloin Futures Collaborative, 2nd Wednesday of the month, 10 a.m., Tenderloin police community room, 301 Eddy. Call 358-3956 for information. Network of residents, nonprofits and businesses sharing information and taking on neighborhood development issues.

SENIORS AND DISABLED

Mayor's Disability Council, 3rd Friday of the month, 1-3 p.m., City Hall, Rm. 400. Call: 554-6789. Open to the public.

Senior Action Network, general meeting, second Thursday, 10 a.m.-noon, St. Mary's Cathedral. Monthly committee meetings, 965 Mission #700: Pedestrian Safety, third Wednesday, 10 a.m.; Senior Housing Action, third Wednesday, 1:30; Information: 546-1333 and www.senioractionnetwork.org.

SUPERVISORS' COMMITTEES City Hall, Room 263

Budget and Finance Committee Daly, Dufty, Ammiano, Mirkarimi, Elsbernd, Wednesday, 1 p.m.

Land Use Committee Maxwell, Sandoval, McGoldrick, Monday, 1 p.m.

New boxing club to fight crime

BY PHIL TRACY

CUTTING ribbons for a business venture just getting started come a dime a dozen, even in the Tenderloin. Still, the one that took place Oct. 17 for the Straight Forward Boxing Gym, located in the basement of 52 Mason St., had to be judged a contender for the title "year's most symbolic scissors slicing."

The Straight Forward Boxing Club is the first legitimate boxing gym in the Tenderloin to open its doors to fighters since the fabled Newman Gym closed 15 years ago. It renews the link between the Tenderloin and boxing gyms, which goes back more than a century and it is the latest effort to help restore street life to something more than ongoing warfare between competing groups of drug dealers.

The event itself was as unelaborated as the gym's name suggests. About 75 people surrounded the doorway, some standing in the street. Words were spoken of the honored role boxing has played in taming the wilder instincts of young men with little money and less control of their anger. Praise was heaped on Ben Bautista, founder of the 9-year-old club, and of the various fighters he has helped to bring along. The club motto — "We don't break laws, we break jaws" — was evoked to general glee.

FREE RENT FOR A FEW MONTHS

The contributions of Julian Davis, executive director of the Tenderloin Economic Development Project, in helping to negotiate a no-payment lease for the first few months, were acknowledged. Then Assemblyman Mark Leno, for whom Davis worked as a field representative aiding the Western Addition, did the snipping, which was symbolically preceded by a 10-count from the crowd. Then everybody hustled downstairs for sodas, cookies, a 15-minute video about the San Francisco boxing scene and a sparring display between two upcoming club members that defied you to pay attention to it for more than a round.

Ben Bautista, 37, started his own boxing career working out of Newman's Gym in the Cadillac Hotel back in 1985. As an entrepreneur, he would have to be characterized as a long shot. Boxing is not wildly popular these days. More people know whether Brittany Spears is wearing underpants than who is the current world heavyweight boxing champion — there isn't one. Mike Tyson finished off whatever legitimacy the sweet science once had and marital arts boxing (includes kicking) is more popular than what is now called "Western-style boxing." Even Bautista acknowledges the change: "They're making a lot of noise within the last couple of years. They get more and more sponsors and more and more TV time. So yeah, they are providing competition."

'FLAVOR OF THE OLD TENDERLOIN'

Still, Western-style boxing has the lore, especially in the Tenderloin. When asked why Tenderloin Economic Development Project chose to back Bautista's boxing gym, Davis talks about filling storefronts with small businesses and Bautista's track record of success, but then adds, "It brings back some of the flavor of the old Tenderloin. There was a time back in the '20s when you had a lot of boxing clubs and the Tenderloin became famous for card rooms, boxing gyms and bars. It was the hip, happening place to be."

In the '50s, Newman's Gym was fondly remembered as one of the places where Muhammad Ali (then known as Cassius Clay) worked out before he beat Sonny Liston for the world title. Former ward leader John Burton remembered it as the place where young men could meet single women, back when that was considered a harmless pastime. Then Mayor George Christopher rode into town on a wave of lace-curtain Irish intolerance, vowing to close all the gaming parlors and gambling establishments, a reputation which boxing clubs had earned as a result of a frivolous bet or two, and the sport — and the neighborhood — began a slow decline.

Whether Bautista can succeed with an enterprise whose heyday is firmly planted in the past remains

to be seen. Maria Wu, deputy director of the Department of Children, Youth and Their Families, thinks he can. Her department came up with \$55,000 for the club. The money was earmarked particularly for juvenile violence prevention in the Western Addition.

"We really do find this program breaks down the barriers with youngsters in populations our other programs have missed," Wu explained. "It also teaches boxing and fitness training."

The Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice will provide second-year funding to the club in the amount of \$40,000. Kenneth Brazile, an MOCJ program officer, said the money is to deal with serious offenders in the juvenile justice system, primarily gang members.

"We've been really pleased with the program," Brazile offered. "It serves as an alternative to the streets, provides the kids with physical and mental well-being and reaches potential or real gang members that might otherwise be involved in violent activities." Like Davis, Brazile felt the gym opening in the Tenderloin is a big plus for its program's effectiveness. "I think the move to Mason Street makes the program a lot more accessible than it was out on Cesar Chavez."

UNDAUNTED BY THE CHALLENGE

Still, less than \$100,000 has been raised. Bautista calls it "small money." Even though the rent is free for the first few months, Bautista is going to have to come up with more and the chances of it coming from the fighters isn't very good. "A lot of my people don't even pay," Bautista confesses.

But like the old Frank Sinatra song goes, Bautista has high hopes. He certainly isn't in it for the money. "I've worked as a consultant for juvenile hall probation department to pay my own bills. I take the kids to (boxing) competitions all the time, almost every weekend. I do this for the love of the sport, the love of the children. I see this as my guiding purpose in life. It's what I was put here to do."

You have to wish a man like that success. ■