

# UPDATES: DEA threat report has pot clubs in panic

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to compare with what they found. The survey report referred to it as "the Chronicle map," though the Chronicle had never been cited.

The TNDC-hired investigators found only 14 stores that sold a dozen or more kinds of fruits and vegetables. The Extra's summer survey found 24 with that many items.

The map designated approximate locations of stores but didn't list addresses, and investigators didn't ask for them. Puzzled how there could be such a discrepancy in data, The Extra reporter retraced his steps in early December and found two erroneous addresses on the list and two groceries that at this time do not offer 12 items. But 20 (see accompanying list) did still feature 12 or more items.

The highlights of TNDC's survey:

- The selection and availability of fresh produce is relatively good, especially given most TL outlets are mom-and-pops.
- All the fresh food is of relatively good quality with produce scoring the highest. Average quality of all food scored 3.6 on a scale of 4.
- Store sizes vary, but the average grocery in the Tenderloin is 1,764 square feet, an urban contrast to the average 10,000-to-20,000 square feet of what the industry labels a "small grocery store" in suburbia. The average American grocery store is 48,750 square feet, the survey report quotes the Food Marketing Institute.
- Of the 122 items in a "healthy market basket," according to the USDA's Thrifty Food Plan, only 13 could be found in 11 of the 12 stores they found that carried a dozen or more fresh items.

## 20 that sell it fresh

HERE are addresses of 20 TL grocery stores that have a dozen or more fresh fruits and vegetables, although the offerings may vary because of seasonal availability:

123 Eddy, 339 Eddy, 345 Eddy, 399 Eddy, 405 Eddy; 483 Ellis, 500 Ellis, 628 Ellis, 724 Ellis; 516 Geary, 669 Geary, 798 Geary; 724 Larkin, 905 Larkin; 225 Leavenworth; 300 Mason; 596 O'Farrell; 726 Post; 67 Taylor; 201D Turk. ■

—TOM CARTER



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

**The Right Way Market** on O'Farrell Street was part of TNDC's survey that found the Tenderloin's fresh produce to be good quality.

## TL TECH LAB HOMELESS

S.F. Network Ministries Computer Training Center and St. Anthony Employment Center/Learning Center had hoped to join forces and, by September 2007, open a 3,000-square-foot Tenderloin Technology Lab with enough room for more than 40 computers so locals could drop in or take classes, and for St. Anthony's interns to learn computer repair.

"No scoop here," says Network Ministries Director Glenda Hope. "We're still awaiting word on our hopes for a location." They've come up empty in their search for an affordable space.

—MARJORIE BEGGS



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

**Tariq Alazraie**, shown in his *Café.com*, gave up his TL pot club, shut down his two in other neighborhoods.

## POT CLUBS: 'ESCALATING WAR'

The Tenderloin finds itself now with just one medical pot club in the wake of a threatened letter from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration in December implying a crackdown on property owners who house dispensaries in the city.

Owner Tariq Alazraie closed his 120-124 Mason St. dispensary that served 800 mostly Tenderloin patients in October. That leaves Sanctuary at 669 O'Farrell St. as the TL's sole dispensary. (Sanctuary needs to clear one more red tape hurdle to function under the city's tighter pot club controls that all clubs face.)

Shortly after, Alazraie shut down his other two dispensaries — on Divisadero and Valencia streets — just ahead of the warning letter the DEA would send to San Francisco property owners leasing to pot clubs.

The tipoff came in the Chronicle's Dec. 5 Matier and Ross column. It said DEA letters would soon go out to 80 owners of buildings housing marijuana dispensaries. The letters would warn that owners are in violation of federal laws against marijuana, medical or otherwise, and can face fines, prison and "forfeiture of assets." Since 1996, state law has allowed dispensing medical marijuana but federal law trumps it.

As of Dec. 20, no central city pot club owners or landlords had received a DEA letter.

"It's a lot of political stuff," Alazraie told The Extra in December. The former Jordanian jet fighter pilot and the married father of two girls had vowed to keep his Mason street dispensary open at least until the end of the year, but the heat changed his mind.

"It's a panicky time for everyone and too much stress — not an easy life," Alazraie said. He will continue to operate his *Café.com* at 120 Mason and another on Mission Street, he said, but he declined to elaborate about his business.

The Extra reported in June that Alazraie's landlord, CitiApartments, had pulled its consent for Alazraie's pot club application. A Planning Commission meeting had been scheduled in May — the Planning Department recommended approval — but Alazraie, who had paid the \$6,691 application fee, withdrew it, hoping to change the landlord's mind. He couldn't.

The DEA letter spread uncertainty through the medical marijuana community, if not panic. It braced for DEA raids they thought were right around the corner.

Axis of Love, a patients' advocacy group, held a press conference on Dec. 7 at the Federal Building to protest the feds' "escalating war."

Rep. John Conyers Jr., D-Mich., chair of the House Judiciary Committee, said in a statement read by a representative from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office that Conyers was "deeply concerned" and intended to "sharply question" the DEA about the tactic. Pelosi is a longtime advocate of states' rights to approve medical marijuana. She has fought in vain for legislation to prohibit federal interference in states allowing medical marijuana.

"I'm glad we got that announcement out before the owners got their DEA letters, so people aren't panicking," said Axis of Love Executive Director Shona Gotchenaur. "We've got 10,000 patients with cards in San Francisco. This tactic could close down safe access throughout the Bay Area. But we hope some will be left standing."

Axis is pressing Bay Area mayors to urge Conyers' committee to call oversight hearings.

Meanwhile, club owners face an uncertain future. Michael Nolin, co-owner of The Green Door,

told The Extra: "Our plans are undecided — I'm on the phone with my lawyer on another line — can I call you back?" He never did.

Sanctuary club owner Michael Welch wasn't flinching. His lawyer told him to sit tight, he said, and if anything came down from the DEA they'd fight it.

"We have good support from the city, too," Welch told The Extra. "And if you just follow the rules, I think you'll be okay."

Welch believes the feds are using a scare tactic.

"They just want to take out the big boys — we don't have any money and not much inventory," he said. "They're going after illegal people, those who aren't doing things right. Unfortunately, there's still that element and it's dark cloud above us."

"I've talked to my landlord and he hasn't received the DEA letter. And I haven't heard of anyone locally who has."

## TRACK STAR STILL SHINING

Ten-year-old Crystal Webb, the MacCanDo Tenderloin Track team star featured in the August issue, still maintains a heavy schedule after her memorable track season, her mother Yvonne Webb reports. Crystal was the first track member in the Boeddeker Park team's history to qualify for national junior competition. Competing in Illinois in July, the 5-foot-1 girl threw a 6-pound iron ball 23 feet 4.75 inches to win third place in the bantam girls shot put category.



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

**Crystal Webb's** successes at summer track meets gave her a champion's confidence.

"She has maintained her confidence and knows she is a champion," says Webb. She homeschools Crystal who continues with the McDaniels Dancers, too. "And she's doing very well with long-division," her mother said.

The team's founder and coach, Rob McDaniels, will be transferred to the Tenderloin Children's Playground in January. After 17 years as a director at Boeddeker Park, home of the park's track club he started four years ago, McDaniels was at first crestfallen. But after assessing the much larger kid pool the playground attracts, he decided it was a good move: No more "calls from parents worried about the drug scene around Boeddeker," he said. He recently was appointed coach of San Francisco's track team in the International Youth Games to be held at Kezar Stadium in July.

## ACTION FOR SENIOR ORGANIZER

Senior Action Network continues its Senior University in January but without its former director, Anh Le, who has become an outreach specialist to 10 communities for Network for Elders, an 18-year-old Bayview nonprofit. And he picked up some kudos since being let go by SAN.

In November, the African American Community honored Le with its Unsung Heroes award at Koret Auditorium in the Main Library. In December, the Examiner chose him as a Bay Area Holiday Angel for making a difference in 2007.

For two years, Le ran the free, two-week Senior University training sessions for Senior Action Network in various low-income neighborhoods. A year ago, Le was prominent in a two-part series The Extra wrote on the lively sessions he conducted for Tenderloin residents at the Dorothy Day Senior Center.

In a previous Bayview-Hunters Point session, Le's class was so motivated that two dozen seniors, led by a 75-year-old disabled woman, descended on the neighborhood FoodsCo to demand it stop selling spoiled food and improve access for the disabled.

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