

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SPECIAL EVENTS

Safety Network Community Leadership Awards Annual recognition of outstanding community leaders citywide working toward a safer San Francisco, Wed., Apr. 2, 6-8 p.m., State Building, 455 Golden Gate, auditorium. Childcare and refreshments. Nomination forms at www.safetynetwork.org Information: Dina Hilliard, 538-8100 x 204.

COMMUNITY: REGULAR SCHEDULE HOUSING

Supportive Housing Network, 2nd Thursday of the month, 3-5 p.m., location TBA. Contact: Kendra Fuller, 421-2926 x304.

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 p.m., 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 p.m. 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, 870 Market, Suite 928. Call for dates and times: 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 III-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 x102.

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 x202 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, a districtwide improvement association.

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, 931-1126.

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.

Central Market Community Benefit District, board meets 2nd Tuesday of the month, 989 Market St., 3rd Fl., 3 p.m. Information: 882-3088, <http://central-market.org>.

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, activi-

ties and improvements. Contact Betty Traynor, 931-1126.

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 times and dates, 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 at 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.

District 6 plays leading role in city's drug cases

Up to 70% of prosecutions originate in area, D.A.'s office tells Safety Forum

BY TOM CARTER

OF the 500-plus drug cases the district attorney's office prosecutes each year, up to 70% come from District 6, Sharon Woo, of the D.A.'s narcotics unit, told a Safety Forum audience.

Woo was one of nine panelists representing parts of the city's criminal justice system who were brought together by the Alliance for a Better District 6 to explain how their departments work. All complained that they are understaffed and all face budget cuts from the city's looming deficit. The Feb. 12 forum drew about 80 people.

Judge David Bellati, presiding judge of San Francisco Superior Court, told how fast the number of court cases is escalating. On Feb. 1, the backlog of 3,300 felony cases was up 16% from February 2007, he said. In the same month, misdemeanors totaled 3,024, up 12%.

Parole Officer Darrin Dill said his department's 80 officers each carries a caseload of about 200. Dill, the only bicycle-riding parole officer, goes into the streets and alleys of the TL and SoMa to find homeless probationers who aren't reporting in. He hooks them up with services to get them on their feet.

MORE CUTS COMING

"Oh, to get my caseload down to 50 or 75, that would be great," Dill said afterward. "I could do so much more and spend more time with each person. I saw 15 today.

"But now we're being asked for a cut in the department."

The statistics appeared grim against the backdrop of the city's \$233 million shortfall for the year starting July 1. With the 8% across-the-board department cuts that Mayor Newsom has requested, things will get worse before they get better. And the slice could go deeper. Newsom has asked departments to identify 5% more in contingency cuts.

Judge Bellati said many departments that work with the courts are also plagued with problems, making headway hopeless. Asked if he could do anything for the mired Superior Court, Bellati, who assigns 51 judges to their departments, gave an example.

He sent an experienced felony court judge to investigate, evaluate and recommend a solution to speed up the pace in misdemeanor courts. The recommendation was to send experienced felony court judges to work three of the four misdemeanor courts.

"The results were very good, too," Bellati said. "But do you know anything about cooking? It was like sending Emeril to man the salad bar."

The experienced judges dealt with cases faster, but of course left an "experience" hole in the felony courts where 697 trials are pending, compared with 421 a year ago.

FAR MORE CRIMINAL TRIALS THAN EVER

"There's no single answer to the backup — these are systemwide issues," Bellati said. He cited shortages in the police force and the district attorney's office, among other things.

"I can't just push a button and make them go away. There are things the court has no control over. Now, we're handling far more criminal trials at Civic Center than we've ever handled."

He needs more courtrooms, Bellati said, and he has asked the mayor for them. A brainstorming retreat is set for mid-month. He hoped that the voters would one day pass a bond issue to build a bigger Hall of Justice, but the public prefers "hospitals and schools" over that, he said.

The D.A.'s office has six trial attorneys that each handle 75 to 125 drug cases a year, Woo said, and of those "more than 500 cases," 60% to 70% come from District 6.

"When we decide what to take to a jury, we want to be smart," she said. "A suspect with prior convictions won't get probation — you're going to jail."

Residents, concerned about drug dealers returning to work the TL, asked who does go to jail.

A conviction for the first drug-selling arrest with no priors brings 30 days in jail at most, Woo said, plus probation and a stay-away order from the area where arrested, sometimes defined as the entire Tenderloin. And next time, the suspect can be routinely searched.

The second conviction means "about a year in jail," and the third sends a dealer to state prison for a year or more.

The D.A.'s office keeps stay-away books with pictures of the offenders, but the orders have a limited life. Once a dealer is out of prison and on parole, the stay-away orders aren't valid.

At the end of the night, most of the aired problems remained Gordian knots. Understaffing, not surprisingly, was the crux of nearly every one with no funding remedy in sight. But at least one problem got attention.

PLEA FROM LATINA MOMS

From the back of the room, Bobbi Lopez said Latina moms with children in the Tenderloin School on Turk Street feel disconnected from police. Lopez works with them through La Voz de La Ciudad Central, an outreach program of Tenderloin Housing Clinic.

Moms walking their kids to school are sexually harassed by homeless people hanging around the school, she said, and no police are around then. Additionally, some moms have experienced traumatic loss of young family members in gang-related killings. The police haven't followed up with them on the cases and the moms feel abandoned by the authorities, she said.

Capt. Croce Casciato of Northern Station, one of five captains representing the police districts connected to District 6, piped up.

"I'll come to the school," said Casciato. "Let's set a day and time. And I'll speak in Spanish." ■