

Hue, cry over latchkey fee at Rec Center

From free to \$600 yearly brings protests

BY TOM CARTER

SOMA'S Gene Friend Recreation Center in the fall will begin charging for a previously free latchkey program that will bar teenagers, changes that have angered the low-income community at odds with what it sees as a disconnecting Rec and Park Department.

A year ago, the center's after-school program was free and served up to 40 K-12 children.

The program is still free for now, but has only eight youngsters, ages 6 to 12. Anyone older is barred from the park. The program has drawn heavily from nearby Bessie Carmichael Elementary School, where three-quarters of its 580 students qualify for free or reduced cost lunch.

In the fall, the center will start charging \$16 a week, or about \$600 a year, for a new latchkey program.

The attendance dip came in October when Rec and Park evicted United Playaz, an anti-violence nonprofit aimed at youth. Playaz had operated a free program from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. for three years, a period when the Rec Center experienced serious security problems.

The community apparently hadn't seen the change coming — although the Board of Supervisors had voted to double the weekly fee to \$18 for the citywide latchkey program in May — and the action set off a series of protests. A coalition formed and complained bitterly to city officials about being left out of the decision-making and about the \$600 fall program that shuts out teenagers.

United Playaz Executive Director Rudy Corpuz says he was unaware of the pending change until an eviction notice appeared on a Rec Center wall in August, along with an announcement that the replacement latchkey program would cost \$300 this year and \$600 next year. But Playaz had been blamed for some of the park's security problems over three years. The worst incident was Aug. 20, 2007. A man and a woman came in at 11:30 a.m. and shot and robbed a man in front of witnesses. The victim, who survived, was identified as a Playaz staffer. Police never got the shooter.

Corpuz thought his program was safe under his memorandum of understanding with Rec and Park. Playaz, funded by donations and a \$200,000 reimbursement contract from the Department of Children, Youth and Their Families, didn't charge Rec and Park for the latchkey activities that ranged from life skills training to sports.

"I didn't know until they posted it," Corpuz said of the change. "And I didn't know the Board of Supervisors passed it either. I

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



84 AND HE WORKS 6 DAYS

Owner of mid-Market icon Kaplan's

PAGE 3

THE BEST MID-MARKET BUSINESS

Mini-boom in housing

PAGE 5



CENTRAL CITY OBITUARIES

PAGE 6

CENTRAL CITY

EXTRA

SAN FRANCISCO

MID-MARKET PART III



PHOTO BY MARJORIE BEGGS

Artist Joseph Sierra poses with the mural he painted in the lobby of the San Cristina, the nonprofit SRO on Market Street where he lives.

Living on the Street

'There's a hipness about its slumminess'

BY MARJORIE BEGGS
AND JONATHAN NEWMAN

"LIVING on Market Street? There's never a dull moment." So says Mark Anthony, who's lived in the San Cristina Residence for seven years. The 58-unit nonprofit SRO is in the thick of it — on Market at the confluence of Golden Gate Avenue, Taylor and

Sixth streets — the entrance to the Taylor Street Arts Corridor.

The depressed mid-Market retail scene has grabbed so much of the spotlight, no one is thinking about the hundreds of people, like Anthony, who walk out their doors daily and encounter the good and the bad of their neighborhood.

And their numbers will swell. In the next couple of years, more than 3,700 new housing units will open up on mid-Market and a block or so either side of it between Fifth and 10th streets.

Residents — today's and tomorrow's — are an eclectic bunch, from the formerly homeless to peripatetic youth to economically stable families that own condos.

Doug Earle is property manager for 1005, 1049 and 1067 Market, all former office buildings converted to living spaces in the early 1990s. Young graduate students, clerical workers, self-employed techies and budding artists make their homes in the three buildings' combined 200 live-work spaces that, Earle said, are "like college dormitories" — no kitchens and all but a few with shared bathrooms. The buildings, secure and well-maintained, are fully occupied, he said, and vacancies are snapped up almost immediately, filled by tenant word-of-mouth.

The appeal? "You can hop on BART or a bus and get anywhere," Earle said. "None of my people have cars."

David Quintanilla, a 22-year-old S.F. State student, has lived with a roommate at 1049 Market for two years. The economics major says he'll probably head for the East

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



PHOTO BY MARK HEDIN

Artist Jessica Laurent moved in August to her live/work space at 1067 Market St., a neighborhood where, she says, "There's never a dull moment."