

GOOD NEWS for...

LATE-MINUTE FREE TAX HELP Most people and families in the Tenderloin qualify. If your 2009 household income was less than \$52,000, IRS-certified tax preparers will help you file your taxes and possibly get refunds and tax credits. Call 211 or (800) 358-8832 or go to www.earnitkeepitsaveit.org for documents you'll need to bring. Earn it! Keep it! Save it! sponsors the tax-preparation program that is funded by United Way of the Bay Area. Central city locations include:

- Food Stamps & CAAP Office, 1235 Mission St., 557-5510, Tuesdays through April 15, 4-7 p.m., by appointment only, Spanish, child care.
- Federal Building, 450 Golden Gate Ave., 1st floor, 522-4307, Mon.-Fri. through April 15, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., by appointment and walk-in, Spanish.
- Northeast Community Federal Credit Union, 288 Jones St., 434-0738, Tue. and Thurs. through April 8, noon-3 p.m., by appointment and walk-in, Chinese.
- Tenderloin Community School, 627 Turk St., Sat. April 10, 10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., walk-in, Vietnamese.
- Vietnamese Community Center of S.F., 766 Geary St., 351-1038, Mon., Wed., Sat. through April 15, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., by appointment only, Vietnamese.
- UC Hastings College of the Law, 200 McAllister St., Tue., Wed., Sat. through April 14, 4:30-6 p.m., walk-in, Spanish.

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS FORUM

After four months' hiatus, the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative will begin meeting again — with a new date, the third Wednesday of the month, and a new time, 11 a.m.-noon. Location remains the same, Tenderloin Police Community Room, 301 Eddy, and Glenda Hope continues as meeting chair. The Futures Collaborative was launched in September 2001 to carry on the work of the disbanded Lower Eddy/Leavenworth Task Force. Neighborhood activists, service providers and interested residents wanted an open, monthly forum to hear about land use changes, new businesses and organizations, emerging issues, and more from knowledgeable presenters who could answer questions at the meetings or tell people how to get answers. The collaborative doesn't take positions or endorse ideas or candidates. Sharing info is what it's all about. The next meeting is April 21. If you have a project or information you'd like to present, contact Michael Nulty, interim coordinator, at 820-3989.

Popular Senior Bingo at the Boeddeker Clubhouse draws up to 40 people twice a week.



PHOTO BY TOM CARTER

THE AIR Better air for all is in the offing since March 16, when supervisors passed a tough new law curtailing secondhand smoke. The city's Tobacco Free Coalition spent three years pushing for smoking bans in such locations as outdoor dining areas; ATM and ticket lines; within 15 feet of entrances, exits and operable windows of commercial and multiunit residential buildings; bars and bingo games; farmers markets; and inside taxis. The ordinance, passed unanimously by the nine supervisors present, goes into effect April 24. Serena Chen of the Bay Area American Lung Association emailed her congratulations to coalition members: "It took countless hours of hearings, reports, a cast of hundreds, and many bottles of aspirin and Tums. And the rest of California and the nation is watching," she wrote.

COMMUNITY HOUSING PARTNERSHIP marked its 20th year in March with impressive stats: 785 units occupied by formerly homeless adults and families, 265 units in the construction pipeline, 200 employees and a \$15 million annual operating budget. Also, March 1, Jeff Kositsky ended his eight years as executive director, overseeing operations that more than doubled the number of housing units CHP owns and manages. Besides housing, CHP offers residents job training that provides workforce readiness and real work experiences and outpatient substance abuse and mental health treatment — all buttressed by intensive case management. Kositsky's successor, Gail Gilman, doesn't plan to take it easy just because things look rosy. "The economic challenges and the city's financial crisis mean we have to fight for funding year to year," she said. "The key for us is the quality of treatment and supportive services attached to our housing." Does it work? CHP reports that each year 98% of its tenants retain their housing permanently — the highest percentage among the formerly homeless in the nation, Gilman says, Happy birthday.

PARK USERS Spring, the arrival of milder weather and more daylight hours are celebrated weekdays through mid-May at the Boeddeker Park Clubhouse with a series of programs for seniors and children under the guidance of new co-directors Melvina Hill and Rob McDaniels. Mondays, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., it's tea time with cakes and fruit in the park's upper picnic area; Tuesdays and Thursdays, mark your cards for Senior Bingo 11 a.m.-1 p.m.; Wednesdays, bring the toddlers 10-11:30 a.m. for parent and child art exploration; Fridays, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., grab a seat, have a snack and settle in for a classic movie; and every weekday, 10-11:30 a.m., build up strength outdoors, weather permitting, in the adult and senior fitness program. "Participation in the programs is growing each week," Hill says. "We've had everything from presentations on heart disease and diabetes-prevention to poetry discussions at our tea times." More info: sfreconline.org or 831-6800.



PHOTO BY ALLISON ROBERTS

Winnie Phan, 17, in the Clubhouse courtyard, has been a TL Boys & Girls Club member since she was 6 years old.

Tenderloin native youth of the year

Statewide honor for Boys & Girls Club star

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

WINNIE Phan has a million-dollar smile and good reason to keep smiling: She was just named the Boys & Girls Clubs' California Youth of the Year and will compete this summer for the Pacific region title. If she wins that, it's on to the national competition and the chance to be feted by President Obama in an Oval Office ceremony.

Phan, 17, is a central city star. She was born in the neighborhood and has been coming to the Tenderloin Boys & Girls Clubhouse since she was 6.

Growing up in the Tenderloin wasn't easy, she says. "I was scared being out on the street and it always seemed dangerous, but I got used to it."

The clubhouse became her refuge. "I felt safe there. When I was little I came every day after school, and I still come every weekday. It's my home away from home."

Phan's parents, from Vietnam, settled in the Tenderloin 18 years ago, raising Phan and her older brother in a studio apartment.

"It was hard being crammed into one room," she admits. The family recently moved to a new, much bigger apartment, and Phan got something many teenagers take for granted — her own room. "It's wonderful," she says.

Now a senior at Galileo High School with a 3.8 grade point average, Phan comes to the clubhouse for activities and to mentor younger club members. She calls mentoring "very important — we're role models and the younger kids follow us," adding that her mentors were her big brother and clubhouse staff.

Winning the Youth of the

Year competitions — in February she won the San Francisco contest — surprised her, she says. The 63-year-old award program, sponsored by Reader's Digest Foundation, recognizes young people who show exceptional character, leadership and community commitment.

When Phan highlights meaningful clubhouse experiences, it's clear why she's already run away with two awards: "Getting involved in the community is so important," she said. "In the Torch Club [for 11- to 13-year-old clubhouse members] we had a two-month project where we went to Dorothy Day Community and played bingo and cooked stir fry for the seniors."

Even better, she says, was a project depicting Tenderloin crime, street trash and eating habits. She led 10 teammates in creating a 5-minute video, showed it at the clubhouse and afterward organized a discussion about the importance of keeping the neighborhood clean.

Phan beat out eight other kids around the state for the California Youth of the Year award, which comes with a \$1,000 scholarship. She'll be up against eight or nine young people for the Pacific Region title and its \$10,000 scholarship. Then the five regional winners will compete for the national title and a \$15,000 scholarship.

Her future? Phan wants to be a pediatrician, she says, and is waiting to hear from the many California State universities where she's applied. She's sure she'll keep doing community service projects, wherever she is, and will return to the Tenderloin clubhouse as an alumna with stories to tell and support for those coming up.

"There's no leaving the clubhouse," Phan says, flashing her winning smile. ■