

Sheriff's pilot puts more cops on the beat

Mirkarimi funds 6-month program enhancing TL safety

By JONATHAN NEWMAN

THE SFPD agreed to Sheriff Ross Mirkarimi's proposal last year that his deputies transport and book suspects arrested from two of the city's busiest district stations — Tenderloin and Mission. When prisoners required medical attention, sheriff's deputies would take them to S.F. General before booking.

Funding came from Mirkarimi's department budget.

This cost-efficient twist on community policing maximized its impact by adding to the time cops could spend on the beat instead of on the written reports and procedural matters arrests require.

Instead of an arresting officer accompanying the suspect to 850 Bryant for charging and booking, sheriff's deputies took the suspect there from district station custody and did the paperwork. Meanwhile, the cop who made the pinch stayed walking the beat.

The six-month experimental program — dubbed Station Transfer Units — operated from mid-July 2014 through the middle of this January. Anecdotal evidence

from the pilot points to hundreds of police man hours per station freed up each month, suggesting a permanent adoption of the program city-wide could be a boon to public safety. But neither Mirkarimi nor TL Capt. Jason Cherniss could cite the number of arrests, estimate the total time saved for officers to remain on the beat or say what the program cost.

The notion of Station Transfer Units is not new. In the aftermath of Loma Prieta, then-Sheriff Michael Hennessey developed an agreement with the SFPD that deputies would handle custody of arrestees from district station to booking. The agreement was quickly implemented and officers turned their full attention to the emergency needs from the quake while deputies expanded their traditional role of supervising and transporting prisoners.

STUs were first written into the Sheriff's Department budget in the late 1990s. Hennessey added 24 deputies, continued transporting and booking prisoners from district stations and assumed responsibility for tracking and serving outstanding arrest warrants.

Then, in 2002, law enforcement budgets tightened. Funding disappeared and the STU program dried up.

Capt. Cherniss estimates his officers typically spend up to two hours each time they transport and book prisoners at the Bryant Street jail and City Prison. When station transfer units were in play during last year's pilot, Cherniss said sheriff's deputies were making four to five transfers from Tenderloin Station each 24-hour shift. That's like adding a cop a day on the district beat.

SFPD protocol doubles that number. Cherniss noted that department policy requires two officers to be involved in each

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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CITIZENS PANEL IN DOLDRUMS

Vacant seats, city disrespect

PAGE 7



YELLOW BRICKS OUT OF THE BLUE

Safe Passage mural draws a complaint

PAGE 5



TALENT SHOW PAYOFF

\$240,000 raised at gala

PAGE 2

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Safe Passage corner captain Johnny Sheeley, left, and Michelle Goodlow, a YMCA staffer who assists in the Safe Passage program, help kids navigate the neighborhood's meanest streets.

Signs TL is safer

Passage budget is booming, presence sets tone on street

By TOM CARTER

PHOTOS BY PAUL DUNN

SAFE PASSAGE, the program to make the Tenderloin's grim sidewalks safe for schoolkids, got another infusion of cash when its April soiree raised \$10,000 from a growing number of supporters sensing Passage is a major influence on the long-sought turnaround in neighborhood safety.

The goal had been to raise \$5,000. "We got a late donation from Glide of about \$400 that put us a little bit over," said Dina Hilliard, executive director. A matching grant from Twitter doubled the money.

This will pay for 300 new vests for the growing stable of on-street monitors and more volunteers expected to join in, and for monthly stipends for corner captains, who stand on the sidewalks an hour and 15 minutes each weekday after school with walkie-talkies, watching over passing children and by their presence making the crowded corner look unavailable for drug dealing.

The fundraiser keeps financial momentum going until Safe Passage receives \$200,000 from the mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development. The money, original-

ly announced in late 2013, included the cost for repainting the fading 11-block sidewalk route with the oversize yellow bricks that the schoolkids follow. The delay was due to staff changes, the OEWD told Hilliard, and the money is to arrive this month, she said.

Meanwhile, a \$150,000 donation late last year from the Tenderloin Health Improvement Partnership, headed by St. Francis Foundation, jump-started the paint job in March.

Keeping the bricks looking fresh is artist John Elliot, who has gotten volunteers from the Department of Public Works, Square and Twitter.

Tickets to the benefit cost \$25 and 141 were sold, with 85 showing up. Among notables were TNDC Executive Director Don Falk, Curry Senior Center CEO David Knego and tech liaisons Mo Tracy of Spotify, Adejire Bademosi of Twitter and Cristina Fink of Yammer. Spotify donated its spacious, glassy, fourth-floor corner room at the Warfield Building for the occasion. The crowd nursed wine and beer and munched hors d'oeuvres on a young sun-splashed evening above the changing street below.

They heard District 6 Supervisor Jane Kim, Tenderloin police Capt. Jason Cherniss and St. Francis Foundation President Kevin Causey emphasize how important Safe Passage is to the well-being of the neighborhood's estimated 3,500 kids.

Causey called the children's route "the spine of the Tenderloin." Starting at Golden Gate Avenue, it covers the midsection of what used to be called the Lower Eddy/Leaven-

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 4