

SoMa pot club OK'd under city's tough new rules

Some say permit process could cut the outlets to 10

BY TOM CARTER

A LOW-PROFILE South of Market pot club bent on being the city's prototype dispensary under new medical marijuana regulations got its permit approved 6-1 by the Planning Commission in January. It's a hearing process that will weed out most of the pot clubs in San Francisco.

The Green Door is the third to get the nod among 27 existing clubs that must reapply and be heard by June 30 if they want to remain in the evolving medical pot business. Owners and planners say that some won't bother, others won't measure up and that no more than 10 will make the grade.

The Green Door made it by following the letter of the law. The pharmacy had been operating since November 2004 at 843 Howard St., four doors from the California Academy of Sciences. Regulation changes brought it back before the Planning Commission for a third time where its patients and others lauded it as a "model" dispensary.

"It's a gem South of Market and adds good character to the neighborhood."

Denise Dorey
GREEN DOOR NEIGHBOR

"It's a huge, huge victory," said co-owner, 33-year-old Michael Nolin, after the 90-minute hearing.

But not all owners will be so fortunate, said Larry Badiner, Planning Commission counsel. "There could be five or six or 10 or so."

San Francisco voters approved the use of medical marijuana in 1978, but it wasn't until 1996 that the state's voters passed Proposition 215 — the Compassionate Use Act — entitling suffering Californians to medicinal marijuana if a doctor recommends it. But that law didn't say how pot was to be made available, leaving it to local authorities. Now, entrepreneurs run 250 dispensaries, collectives and delivery services for the state's 200,000 patients. San Francisco, with 8,500 patients, had 33 outlets at one point.

In 2005, the Board of Supervisors approved tighter regulations, prohibiting on-site smoking in existing dispensaries within 1,000 feet of recreation areas and schools and new clubs from locating that close. They must be located in "green zones," most of which are concentrated downtown and South of Market, and have good security. Operators needed FBI background checks and they had to go before the Planning Commission.

The Green Door had considerable support. State Sen. Carole Migden wrote to the commission urging approval. She praised the Green Door's "safe and affordable access without any adverse effects on their community." Supervisor Chris Daly wrote on Jan. 10 to Nolin, commending the pharmacy's professionalism and charity, and said, "Please keep up the good work."

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St. Anthony's finds a bit of TL history

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Grassroots guerrillas now ready for action

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CENTRAL CITY

EXTRA

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SR. U IN ACTION



PHOTOS COURTESY SENIOR UNIVERSITY

Bayview residents left their Senior University session to protest in front of FoodsCo supermarket.

Fresh food fight

Bayview supermarket stonewalls seniors, but they say it's not over

BY TOM CARTER

SENIORS can't sit around waiting for good things to fall out of the sky for them. That theme popped up in the Tenderloin's third session of Senior University in December. They must act to get their due. And if they need inspiration, they can draw on their Bayview-Hunters Point counterparts.

It was last July when the Bayview-Hunters Point class met in the police station. The session was so stimulating that two dozen seniors, led by a 75-year-old disabled woman, left en masse and descended on a supermarket a block away to demand that it stop selling spoiled food and improve access for the disabled.

It was an important illustration of Tenderloin-based Senior University's grassroots organizing in action. Sr. U. is a program of the TL's Senior Action Network.

Prior to their protest, the seniors had shopped at FoodsCo, buying "fresh" produce they said was spoiled and items being sold beyond their expiration date. They planned to present the stuff to store manager Ric Clonce.

"The fruits and vegetables were rotten and moldy," Bayview resident Beverly Taylor, who led the group, told The Extra. "The meat was stinky and when you held a package your hands smelled bad."

"And you can never park in the (store's) handicapped section because people were just sitting there all day who weren't handicapped and the doorway was crowded with people selling things. In the produce section, there was water all over the floor."

"It just wasn't clean enough, not like Bell or Safeway or the other FoodsCo on Folsom Street."

FoodsCo is a Central and Northern California chain owned by Los Angeles-based Ralphs Grocery Co., owner and operator of 450 stores, including the Cala/Bell stores in the Bay Area. Ralphs is a division of Kroger Co., the nation's largest food retailer, in Cincinnati.

Taylor, director of volunteers for

FoodsCo manager Ric Clonce refunds the protesters' money for the spoiled food.

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GOOD NEWS for...

ACTIVIST and Central City Extra photographer Mark Ellinger has spent four years documenting what he calls “the beauty to be found even in what is nearly in ruins.” The result: The Hotel Project, 160 mostly stunning images of Tenderloin and South of Market buildings, framed at the top by brooding or brilliant skies. It’s a project that got a big boost when The Extra gave Ellinger a camera after his broke. The photos were on display last year for three months in District 6 Supervisor Chris Daly’s office, and a selection of them have a permanent place on the walls at the Central City SRO Collaborative offices, where Ellinger volunteers. The images have helped The Extra tell several stories, including last issue’s piece on a pending Tenderloin historic district. Ellinger has been working to turn his project into a book. “It’s about the buildings and the fate of the people who live there,” he said, “but it’s also about my own recovery and how the project affected me.” He’s pushing to complete the book to coincide with the anticipated historic district designation. Meantime, fans can view his images at <http://upfromthedeep.blogspot.com/index.html>.

THE OFFICE of Self Help, which has served mental health clients for 15 years, is extending its Peer Support phone line hours — until 8:30 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. Anyone feeling lonely or anxious can call 575-1400, ask for peer support, and talk with a fellow client trained to offer support and referrals. “We’re not a crisis line,” says M. Roy Crew, Office of Self Help director, “but you don’t have to wait till things get out of your control to talk to someone.” The phone line, paid for with state Prop 63 funds, opens at 11 a.m., and has peers who also speak Tagalog, Cantonese and Spanish, though not all languages are available at all hours. The Office of Self Help, 1095 Market, Suite 202, is open seven days a week and offers support groups, one-on-one peer counseling, a drop-in center, computer lab and health services: acupuncture, nursing and Reiki, a Japanese stress-reduction and relaxation technique.

THE MOVE to list the Tenderloin on the National Register of Historic Places has passed another hurdle, announced Randy Shaw, who’s gaffing the project through his Tenderloin Housing Clinic (see issue #63 for full story). The city’s Historic Preservation Fund just approved a \$25,000 grant to THC, which has hired East Bay architect Michael Corbett to resurvey the proposed historic district and update the text of an application prepared in 1983 but never filed. Corbett, who worked on the ‘83 application, is the author of “Splendid Survivors: San Francisco’s Downtown Architectural Heritage.” Next steps: THC sends the completed application to the state Historical Resources Commission, which returns it to the city for its approval, then recommends that the National Park Service and the Keeper of the Register approve the nomination — or not. “If Corbett can work fast enough to finish by May, we could make the August agenda of the state [commission] and the district could be approved at that meeting,” Shaw said. “It is too soon to tell whether we can make the August agenda.”

If you have some good news, send it to marjorie@studycenter.org or tom@studycenter.org.

Time capsule from 1912 unearthed by St. Anthony’s

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

THE Salvation Army discovered a 1,500-gallon drum filled with oil last summer when excavating at 240 Turk St. Now, St. Anthony Foundation has found its own piece of history: a 20-by-8-by-8-inch sealed copper box buried beneath the floor at 150 Golden Gate Ave., the old Knights of Columbus building.

The building was being demolished when workers noticed a metal plate in the floor of the marble lobby.

“Under the plate, which read Knights of Columbus, the contractor found the box and opened it,” Paula Lewis, St. Anthony’s operations director, told the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative in January. She was reporting on the progress of the new home of St. Anthony’s admin offices, social services and a temporary dining room, a five-story building scheduled to open next year.

After the meeting, Lewis gave The Extra a rundown of the time capsule’s contents:

An invitation to the 3 p.m. laying of the cornerstone on Feb. 11, 1912; articles about the event in the Examiner, Chronicle and S.F. Call; a photo of a ceremonial silver trowel, made by Shreve & Co. jewelers, used to lay the cornerstone; and a roster of the original members of the S.F. Council of Knights of Columbus, the Catholic fraternal organization, chartered in 1902.

“Then there’s an adding machine tape-like list of names, but we don’t know who the people are,” Lewis said. “Maybe those invited to the cornerstone laying?”

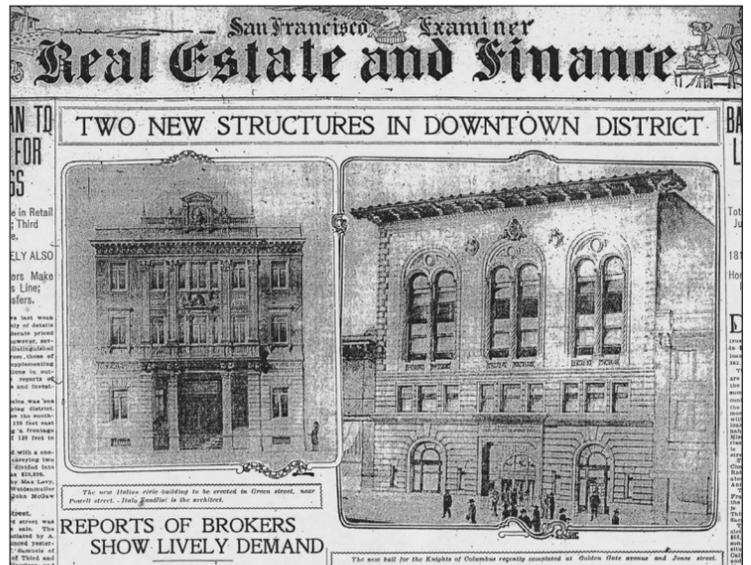
The box also held a copy of Columbia, the Knights’ publication, now a magazine in print and online but then a Central City Extra-size rag. Pages from the Boston Globe and the Brooklyn Daily Eagle were in the box, too.

“We have no idea why those East Coast papers were included,” Lewis said. “Maybe to give the idea of what was going on elsewhere.”

The Extra hit the microfiche machine in the periodicals sections of the Main Library and did some sleuthing. According to a Feb. 12 Call article, the cornerstone laying was a huge event.

After a benediction at St. Mary’s Cathedral, cars full of dignitaries and thousands of marchers paraded along Van Ness to Market, up Jones and over to Golden Gate to assemble at the site. Archbishop Patrick William Riordan, the city’s second archbishop who served from 1884 to 1914, recited prayers and “with a silver trowel his grace spread the cement that will bind the stone,” wrote the Call’s staff reporter.

The story solved the mystery of the East Coast papers: They carried accounts of the arrival home from Rome of Archbishops John Murphy Farley of New York and William Henry O’Connell of Boston.



The Examiner’s real estate page from 1912 featured the laying of the cornerstone for the Knights of Columbus building.

The cornerstone-laying ended with the entire assemblage, estimated at 5,000, singing “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

The ceremony was big, but not big enough to make the front page of the San Francisco papers. There, readers learned that supervisors were planning to drive loan sharks out of the city; a motorman on the Haight Street line found a \$1,380 wad on his streetcar; burglars in Oakland, tunneling 50 feet from a church into a bank, fled when the air got too foul; and bidding at the U.S. Custom House was fast and furious, up to \$40,000, for a “famous” Russian art collection. The Call — 56 pages for 5 cents — ran a bird’s-eye illustration of what the upcoming 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition would look like.

Only the Chronicle ran a story about the most important international news of the day: the end of the 268-year-old Qing, or Manchu, Dynasty, the last of China’s imperial dynasties that had ruled for 2,000 years. “President Sun Yat Sen is in absolute control,” said the story, referring to the head of the new

Republic of China.

Lewis said St. Anthony’s hasn’t decided yet what to do with its time capsule.

TRANSIT FACTS

Surprise! Muni needs a systemwide overhaul to increase ridership and lower costs. That was the message that Peter Straus, Muni’s manager of service planning, brought to the Collaborative in January.

In a slick presentation, Straus highlighted the early findings and goals of the Transit Effectiveness Project — an 18-month joint effort of the Municipal Transportation Agency, Muni’s overseer, and the controller’s office.

Project Manager Julie Kirchbaum joined Straus for the presentation.

The project was launched last summer and will end in December with recommendations on how Muni can improve “mode share” — bureaucracy-speak for increasing the number of people who choose Muni to get from here to there.

People take 4.5 million trips a

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CENTRAL CITY EXTRA
SAN FRANCISCO

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Market Street tribute to historic bandit/poet

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

STRAPPED to the streetlight in front of 1051 Market is an aluminum plaque, a foot wide and two feet high, screen-printed white with a red rule around these words, also in red:

SPLENDOR & DEATH

Underneath, in much smaller type: In memory of Victor Jara. Below that, even smaller: Pedestrian Contemplation Plaque.

It looks so much like nearby No Parking and No Stopping signs, it almost melts into the environment. And that's its purpose — sort of.

Reached by e-mail, Los Angeles artist David D. Maupin wrote, "The intention was to assume an 'official' kind of aesthetic, so people would trust the information's source as objective. Of course, it's not."

The 20 plaques Maupin has mounted elsewhere in San Francisco and in Oakland and Los Angeles commemorate people and events that appeal to him personally. They also push pedestrians to — well — contemplate the plaques. Perhaps not a lot do, as the Jara plaque went up months ago without fanfare. But once you notice it, it gets you thinking.

Victor Jara — Víctor Lidio Jara Martínez — was a singer, educator and political activist who was murdered in Chile right after Salvador Allende in the September 1973 coup.

Is there a Jara connection to 1051 Market? The Extra asked Maupin.

"Sort of indirectly," he wrote. "That plaque is where a museum of curiosities once was located; part of the museum's collection included what they claimed to be the decapitated head of Joaquin Murieta. Murieta was a famed bandit, according to some a Californian Robin Hood. 'Splendor and



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

This low-key sign, put up by an L.A. artist, is supposed to look sort of official and make pedestrians stop, look and think about it.

Death' by Pablo Neruda is the most well-known account of Murieta's story/myth, and has been interpreted in song by many, including Victor Jara. Jara is as Murieta is, both a hero and a victim, thus the plaque's dedication to him."

Some Maupin plaques are tied more closely to their location.

One in San Francisco, at Justin Herman Plaza at the Embarcadero, reads "1986/1993, Mark Gonzalez vs. Justin Herman."

According to a 2003 posting in the online Skateboarder Magazine, "In '86, Mark Gonzalez ollied from the top of the wave [in the Vaillancourt Fountain] down to the big stage. Thus, The Gonz Gap was born. It instantly became a benchmark gap for the next decade, and in '93 Gonzalez became the first person to kickflip it."

Maupin's five Bay Area plaques, including the Jara dedication, were installed as

part of "International Waters," an exhibition mounted last summer by Steven Wolf Fine Arts at 49 Geary.

Maupin, who manufactures and installs all the plaques himself, hasn't had any complaints from authorities, he says, though he's had to replace a few that were taken or damaged.

"As a former graffiti writer, I understand how to be rather inconspicuous."

George's Gourmet Deli faces the Splendor & Death plaque, but owner Marvin Billatora, standing behind the counter making sandwiches and pouring coffee, pretty much ignores it.

"One day it was just there," he said. "I have no idea what it means. Sometimes customers ask and I just say, 'I don't know.'"

Maupin's other plaques can be seen at www.pedestriancontemplationplaque.com/main.html. ■

Each passenger trip costs Muni \$1.75, study shows

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day in San Francisco, according to a 2004 County Transportation Authority survey. But only 17%, or 765,000 trips, are on public transit — 92% of those are on Muni, 8% on BART. Among the other 3.7 million travels, 2.8 million or 62% are by car; 892,000 or 20% are by foot; and 40,000 or 1% are on bikes.

"The Transit Effectiveness Project includes market research," Straus said. "We've already done a random phone survey of 575 S.F. residents asking whether they ride Muni and, if they don't, why they don't."

The project, which is analyzing Muni service and operations, has a \$2.4 million budget, Straus said, with funding from Prop E, which passed in 1999.

Straus gave good news and bad about Muni: It's a well-used system, with 205 annual rides per San Franciscan, almost double that of New York City residents, according to a 2004 National Transit Database. And Muni buses' cost-effectiveness — the operating cost per passenger trip — is lower than that of buses in New York, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Seattle or AC Transit in the East Bay. Muni's is \$1.75 per passenger trip; Seattle's is more than double, at \$3.58.

The bad is dismal: We may outshine those other areas, but since 1991 the cost per trip is up 30%; system productivity is down 19%; the cost per hour to run the system is up 12%. The average speed of all Muni vehicles hovers around 8 mph, just a fraction faster than in 1999.

Reliability — waiting time, trip time, dependability of schedules — is tanking. Late pull-outs from the terminal are way up. When Prop E passed, Muni met its schedules only 65% of the time. The goal was to push that to 85% by 2004. Last year, it still

was under 70%. Muni also was aiming at 85% headway adherence — the percentage of vehicles keeping consistent intervals, thus avoiding bunching and big gaps. But from 2001 to 2006, headway adherence rose only from 65% to 69%.

"This spring, when all the data are in, we'll have the second series of public workshops on the project," Straus said. Because the last major evaluation of Muni took place 25 years ago, he encouraged people who care about the transit system to attend meetings, contact the project with concerns, ask for presentations at neighborhood group meetings and check out the project Web site, www.sftep.com/files/TEPBriefingBookHighlights.pdf.

NEW IN THE 'HOOD

At the December Collaborative meeting, members were introduced to three new Tenderloin businesses: L.A. Café, 7x7 Deli & Market, and Chop It Up Barbershop. Bailey Williams of Ventura Partners, a real estate consulting firm that helps owners find tenants and incubates new businesses, made the introductions. It has offices at 456 Ellis and in Santa Cruz, and handles both TNDC and A.F. Evans portfolios, Williams later told The Extra.

Farhad Saiyed is the owner of Chop It Up at 141 Taylor, which opened Sept. 9 in a TNDC-owned building.

"This is my first business and all's going very well," he said, "except for all the people hanging out in front." He has three full-time employees and plans to hire three more for the combo barbershop-beauty salon.

L.A. Café opened Sept. 30 at 201 Turk, a building developed by A.F. Evans, which also holds the master lease. Anh Troung, who owns the cafe with husband Lien — hence the "L.A." — said she has one employee and family members help out

when things get busy. Her ambitious menu has 44 items, from omelets to grilled pork sandwiches to pho, plus an array of beverages and side orders.

The 7x7, at 476 Eddy, another TNDC building, is still being rehabbed and isn't open yet, Williams said.

"The business owner had a thrift store and then another deli at this same site," Williams said. "But he's changing the focus to provide halal meats to the Muslim community." ■

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Special seating on Muni emerges as hot issue for graduating seniors

BY TOM CARTER

TALK about racism and the n-word comes up. "So what's with one black man calling another this awful word?" Ed Evans asked out loud during Session 3 of the four-session Senior University. Racism was topic A in the Diversity discussion in the Dorothy Day dining room.

Al Stewart, 65, stood to answer Evans. The African American former bus driver is a self-described "behind-the-scenes" person with no public-speaking experience. He was there, he said later, to support the endeavors of his significant other, Ava Handy Beckham, a vocal participant, and not because of activist aspirations.

Stewart explained that blacks own the n-word and like to use it for shock value.

"Blacks are on the cutting edge of negative commentary," he said. "The n-word is used with special familiarity (among blacks). It's a term of endearment that empowers them while it's shocking to others."

"People are frightened when they hear it and they're repulsed," Stewart said. "I understand it but it doesn't appeal to me. But it's about empowering oneself (as an African American)."

The diverse gathering of more than 40 seniors included Asians, Pacific Islanders, African Americans, Latinos and Caucasians. A half a dozen, including Evans and Beckham, are in wheelchairs or use walkers. Everyone had seen or personally experienced racism but no one

seemed to know a good way to deal with it. Most said that rather than confronting racists, they'd avoid them.

"If I thought there was racism in this room," Stewart said, "I'd walk out."

"I try to rise above it," said Yoko Takahashi. "If they'll listen to me, I'll tell them it's wrong. But I'm not going to waste my time on someone that's hopeless."

"Racism is illegal," said Jacquie Bryson, who played the mayor in a previous mock exercise. "When it crosses that line you wonder where the niceties went. But my mother taught me to stand up. And I take action."

Anti-Semitism, sexism, classism, homophobia and ageism were also discussed. The latter topic brought Muni's seating for seniors and disabled to the forefront. The seniors complained that youngsters sit in the special section and don't relinquish their seats, as required by law, but they chalked it up to youthful ignorance while generously accepting some of the blame.

"Lots of seniors never ask for it," said Carol Hudson. "Kids aren't educated and don't know. We make enemies when we order them out. But somebody fought hard to get that for us."

"Yes," said another woman, "young people don't understand and that's why we have that problem."

The topic struck a chord. Many here have had some nasty experiences riding the bus to the point that senior and disabled seating could become a cause. Evans told how Tenderloin residents saved some bus stops on the 38-Geary line last year through tenacity and compromise. Winning something from Muni is not only possible, it's been done, he said.

But if action on bus seats is to be pursued, it will require leadership. And after a lunch of boneless chicken breast, brussels sprouts, roll and cheesecake with cherries in syrup, the final discussion of the day concerns just what a leader is and where does one come from?

The seniors suggested so many leadership qualities that they quickly filled sheets of butcher paper at the end of the stage where Sr. U's Anh Le recorded the group's exclamations: "empowering," "charismatic," "credible," "gracious," "diplomatic" and "have guts" and, yes, someone says, "an understanding for wildlife." That finds a place on a sheet, too.

"How are you a leader in your community?" Le asked them.

The question was a near bust. People insisted on continuing to define what a leader is. Le interpreted for the Vietnamese women at one end of the room. They, too, described characteristics: "A good leader should set a good example" and "get things done."

"But you can't be a good leader unless you've been a good follower," Ava Beckham said.

"You've got to have due diligence," Jacquie Bryson said.

"I don't consider myself a leader," Stewart said. "I'm a background person. I lead by example."

"To be a leader, you have to take care of yourself first," Yoko Takahashi said.

With that, Le concluded and reminded everyone to be prepared at the next session to deliver their three-minute speeches — and maybe even sing a song — before graduating with a certificate recognizing their achievements.

ANTICIPATION was in the air at the final session, completion day for 40 seniors who had shared a lot, and got to know each other. Not one to understate an occasion, Sr. U Director Le was at the back of the Dorothy Day dining room fiddling with a tape of "Pomp and Circumstance" that he planned for graduation (with mortar boards) and the awarding of certificates. But the tape player was failing him. Helene Thuy Vu was reading her four-page speech as the seniors took their seats. Evans held up his five pages in 26-point type. "Here," he said, "read this. I really worked on it. Whaddya think?"

Shirley Bierly and Le welcomed everyone in five languages and the final round of self-introductions became a groundswell of spontaneous commentary. For some it was evidence of newfound confidence.

The first up, Ben Lee, who said he'd always been too nervous to speak, rattled on for two minutes about his origins and his life. All the Vietnamese ladies spoke, each stating the year she immigrated. Some said how glad they were to be in San Francisco. A Filipina said she had worked with "boat people in Chicago." Another had helped two supervisors write a pedestrian safety ordinance. The Russian couple said they came here in 1991. John Wood, a retired postal worker, said he had lived in the Tenderloin 41 years and how he "enjoyed this organization."

The night before, Le had called most of the seniors to remind them to be ready for today. Of one woman, originally from the Netherlands, he asked to find some "words of wisdom" to contribute.

So when grandmotherly Minnie Fry stood and identified herself, she said:

"We have a right to say yes to what we like and no to what we don't. And that's what this country is. And I've learned a lot being here."

Kitt Ellis turned to Le and said, "You should take this to TV."

Introductions were the warmup. And although their "demand" speeches were supposed to introduce a problem, tell a personal story relating to it, and make a demand about how to solve it — as part of the activist training — more than half the seniors ignored the structure as well as the lectern and microphone at one end of the room. They were emboldened now — some as never before — with the freedom to speak their minds. They also knew

nothing was wrong with whatever they said, and that they would be praised for expressing themselves.

In an animated delivery, Evans told a complicated, seven-minute tale about security problems at an apartment building, getting a petition signed by the tenants, contacting the Housing Authority, the city's Disability Council and congressional representatives for improvement. Bryson, wearing her trademark floppy brown hat with a large white flower, told of blocked and cracked sidewalks in SoMa that "punish" the disabled, her exasperation over dealing with the Department of Public Works, and how double-parked trucks endanger pedestrians. She ended with an impassioned plea for the city to create a Department on Disabilities. Beckham, who lives in the low-income Madonna Residence, got a smile or two when, in the spirit of equality, she asked to be placed in "housing in Pacific Heights."

Angelo D'angelo gave a rambling speech about creativity and concluded saying, "God bless America."

"Thank you, Angelo, for sharing from your heart," Le said.

Carol Hudson strode to the back of the room and turned to face everyone. Her motto, she said, paraphrases JFK: "Ask not what your community can do for you, but what you can do for your community." Her activism began 40 years ago as a naïve young mother, she said. The diminutive Hudson said she was "proud" so many seniors enrolled for Sr. U because too many people as they get older tend to "run out of gas." Not her.

"I'm going to leave Sr. U with Muni's lax attitude on seating for seniors as my burning issue to pursue," she said. "I've written many letters with no reply. I don't like being ignored, and I don't think anyone does. We've earned the right as senior citizens to speak out. I don't think buses should take off until seniors are seated and maybe people should be ticketed if they don't turn over their seats to seniors."

Don Mark said people have to find the courage to speak up for their entitlements.

"Some members of my family are bus drivers," said Mark. "And if they weren't doing their job, I'd complain. It's my job to insist on the American dream."

Hudson's speech sparked several comments and inspired others, in turn, to speak out on panhandling, blocking sidewalks, homelessness, safety in the streets, illegally selling medications, wheelchair access and lack of public restrooms. But Stewart addressed the moment as a benchmark in his life.

"This has challenged me to take on a leadership role in my community," he said. His brown hat was pulled down near his eyes and his gray mustache added a distinguished air. "I was encouraged every time to express myself." He thanked all the participants for speaking out, too, and enriching his experience. "I accept my honorary degree with pride, and I

hope it leads to something."

Le noticed how moved Stewart was.

"Can I share what I see?" Le said. "There are tears in his eyes." And to Stewart he said, "You are a blessing to us all."

The Vietnamese ladies all spoke up and contributed more than usual. Full participants now, their personal stories came out for the first time, some so poignant they generated generous responses.

Ba Nguyen said that when she returned to Vietnam she was a target of disparaging political remarks and she didn't feel welcome. John Wood likened it to Europeans returning after World War II to countries that had been occupied by the Germans. "They had left instead of staying," Wood, an avid history reader, said. "And when they came back, people wanted to know why they hadn't had faith (that the country would survive). There was a built-in resentment."

The woman also said that because the cost of bribes to officials was soared it is now every

difficult to leave Vietnam. Another woman, Dan Nguyen, who came here in 1992, said her daughter left behind in Vietnam fell ill and died and soon after her husband was killed in a car accident. They left three children, 21, 19 and 16. "They want to come to the United States," she said through Le, who interpreted. She started crying. "I don't know how to sponsor them," she said.

Suggestions flew across the room. Contact the offices of Sens. Feinstein and Boxer, someone said. Try the Vietnamese consul, said another. The government would want to know if her family could support them, someone said. Yes, she said, she has a sister here who can help.

Then the activities turned to entertainment. Le wanted everyone to contribute something, a song, a poem, a reading. He asked the Russian woman to sing a Russian song and she said no, she'd prefer an American one, "We Wish You a Merry Christmas," which she stood and sang. The Vietnamese ladies went to the front of the room. One introduced the 1968 Doris Day song, "Que, Sera, Sera," and they sang it together.

D'angelo followed at the microphone, energetically reciting "The Impossible Dream" song. With every impending challenge that the lyrics cited, his voice rose.

There were other outpourings — "Feliz Navidad," "I Left My Heart in San Francisco," thank you prayers, extemporaneous thank you songs, "Jingle Bells," Vietnamese love songs



Hyung Shin, flanked by Shirley Bierly, Price and Le, holds her certificate after speaking to a group in English for the first time.

and poems "Remembering Mother" and "Humble People."

Hyung Shin stood and announced in English she would play the piano. The 81-year-old Korean in a bright red sweater took out her sheet music, went gingerly to the piano by the big American flag on the wall, put on her glasses and haltingly played through a sweet Beethoven piece. She said later it was the first time she had ever spoken to a group in English and the first time she played the piano in the United States.

Seniors who attended at least three sessions were eligible to graduate. Le and a half dozen others hadn't found out how to work the machine to play "Pomp and Circumstance," but the excitement level was high enough without it. As carrot cake was served, everyone whose name was called went up front. They got their picture taken holding their framed certificate of graduation, a purple iris and a blue mortar board on their heads, standing with Shirley Bierly, or Le, or Bill Price, the Senior Action Network president, a co-founder in 1994.

"This is the largest Senior University group I've seen," said Price, 92, who wore a suit for the occasion. "We're always looking for more."

SAN groups had gone to Sacramento to lobby four times during the year, Price proudly said afterward. And the association, he added, was deeply committed to pedestrian safety. Who knew what tottering seniors or disabled person now brimming with satisfaction as they left the cafeteria would become a burr on the seat of civic complacency. ■



PHOTOS BY TOM CARTER

Al Stewart (left) got a graduation certificate from SAN President Bill Price and Sr. U Director Anh Le and an experience he didn't expect.

C O V E R **EXTRA!** S T O R Y

Fight for fresh food in Bayview shows grassroots guerrillas in action

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Network for Elders that serves Bayview-Hunters Point and Visitation Valley, sent 21 volunteers to Senior University. By the second meeting of the four-session course, they had identified FoodsCo as a problem store. So the activists-in-training did their shopping one morning for hard evidence, then picketed outside chanting, "Oh baby, baby we're tired of FoodsCo," working in spoiled meat-and-vegetables lyrics, fitting them to a Supremes song "Where Did Our Love Go?" The action was born of the university's session, "Taking Action in the Community to Achieve Changes."

At FoodsCo, the protesting seniors were joined by a few shoppers. Clonce, manager for less than a year, came out with a security

guard and invited them inside to talk. "He was angry," Taylor said. "He thought we were unethical and had surprised him. But he refunded the money for the food."

Although the seniors aired their grievances, no agreements were made with FoodsCo. And a letter to the company later didn't get results either, Taylor said. Nonetheless, buoyed by their new skills, protesters returned to the store for spot checks, once in August and again in September, but there had been no improvement in vegetables or meat, she said.

The lack of fresh fruit and vegetables in Bayview-Hunters Point has been a point of contention since the nonprofit Literacy for Environmental Justice took it up four years ago and established a Good Neighbor program to encourage small groceries and liquor stores to stock more of it and less alcohol and tobacco.

Supervisor Sophie Maxwell in 2003 got city agencies to support LEJ's efforts by offering store owners incentives.

"The SuperSave on Third Street is one of ours," LEJ spokeswoman Anjali Asrani said in an interview. "In the last two years, it has increased its sale of produce from 1% to 15%. Its tobacco and liquor sales are down 10%, but the store's overall receipts are up 12%."

"We don't deal with FoodsCo because it is a chain and it's hard to get to. I was last in there two weeks ago (in December) to look around. The produce was rotting, discolored and overpriced. I don't buy anything there. It's past edible."

In the July 19 issue of the San Francisco BayView newspaper, protester and university graduate Mary Booker was quoted about the Senior University action: "I've believed for a

long time that this type of organizing is what we need to bring changes about in our community. And I am glad we got the training and took decisive action at FoodsCo. This is just the beginning."

After the first demonstration, Senior University Director Anh Le followed up with a call to Clonce.

"I telephoned him to provide the seniors with an update regarding the seniors' demands, as he had promised he would do," Le said in a Jan. 19 e-mail to The Extra.

"In that telephone conversation, he refused our invitation; he also spoke in an unprofessional manner regarding the seniors from the Bayview. I refused to listen further to his language denigrating the seniors."

Reached at the store by The Extra in early December, Clonce referred all questions to

Ralphs spokesman Terry O'Neil in Los Angeles.

O'Neil said the Bayview FoodsCo has been renovated at a cost of several million dollars and a side door was expanded to a double-door exit. He told The Extra it is store policy to remove food that exceed the "sell by" date.

"We made the renovations because we believe in the community," O'Neil said. "We invite everyone to come back to the store. We share their concerns and take them very seriously. It's the way we stay in business. We like it that the people take ownership. We encourage them. We'll have a meeting with Senior Action Network before the end of the year."

But Beverly Taylor wasn't satisfied.

"It still isn't any better than before," Taylor said. "He (Clonce) put (orange) cones outside the door to keep it accessible but the handicapped parking is still bad. You'd think a store

would appreciate someone bringing these things to their attention."

O'Neil did not contact Senior Action Network or leaders of the Bayview protesting group, Le said, and no meeting was held. The Extra's repeated attempts in January to reach O'Neil, who was gregarious and helpful when contacted in December, never got further than his secretary, who assured us he would return the calls. But he never did.

Taylor says she has 30 seniors on a committee ready to spring back into action.

"We'll keep his (the manager's) feet to the fire," Taylor says. "If he doesn't clean up he's going to get cleared out. These are our stomachs we're talking about, our health. We want the same considerations as elsewhere. It's the only big supermarket in the neighborhood." ■

Dodge leaves Central City for Oregon farm life

BY TOM CARTER

As cherry-cheeked Sam Dodge prepared to leave the concrete jungle for the green pastures of Oregon, the 31-year-old District 6 head of the Central City SRO Collaborative got a hero's send-off on Jan. 25.

Some 30 friends and fellow activists gathered at the party that Dodge's boss, Tenderloin Housing Clinic Executive Director and lawyer Randy Shaw, threw for him at the collaborative office on Hyde Street.

Dodge began his job in 2000 when SRO fires plagued South of Market and the Tenderloin and hotel visitor fees were a common rip-off. Dodge spent six years fighting shoulder to shoulder with SRO tenants for their rights and better living conditions. Now he's traveling in New Zealand before taking a reflective break on a friend's large family farm in Oregon where he will raise bees.

"It's hard to say goodbye because I love it here," he said before the party.

Supervisor Chris Daly presented him with a Board of Supervisors resolution honoring him. Dodge was involved with issues involving SRO sprinklers, visitor charges and mailboxes resulting in legislation that Daly authored and got passed.

One by one, a dozen fellow workers came forward to sing his praises at the microphone, describing him as patient, kind, loving, gracious, positive, optimistic and eager for a challenge.

"There is no one greater than Sam Dodge," said Sister Bernie Galvin, head of Religious Witness for the Homeless. "I'll never forget him."

"We love you," said Ken Werner, tenant activist from Trinity Plaza apartments. "Thanks for coming into our lives."

"I wish I was 20 years younger," said tenant volunteer at the collaborative, Terrie Frye, drawing a laugh.

Tenderloin Housing Clinic, which master leases 15 SROs for the Department of Human Services, hired Dodge, a graduate of Evergreen College in Washington, to be a tenant organizer. Dodge had been a union organizer in Northern California but returned to Seattle disillusioned. Then, inspired by "The Activist's Handbook," which Shaw authored, he answered a THC ad in San Francisco and was hired.

Dodge began meeting with tenant reps to zero in on code violations, common among the city's 500 SROs that house 30,000 residents. In 2001, THC created the Central City and Mission SRO collaboratives through a Department of Human Services contract. The help centers were meeting places for tenant reps to decide key issues. Dodge became the Central City program director. The collaborative's SRO tenant reps have grown from 10 to 30.

Meredith Walter was the first tenant organizer Dodge hired in 2001. He gave her a tour of a deplorable Sixth Street SRO then asked if she still wanted the job. Walter, then 22, was shocked at what she saw but said yes. Her greater astonishment was that rooms were renting for \$800 a month during the



PHOTO BY MARK ELLINGER

Sam Dodge: "It's hard to say goodbye."

dot-com boom.

But Sam has an effect on people," she said. "I was once in a room with 15 Trinity Plaza residents when we were organizing and things were grim. But when Sam walked in, the whole room lit up."

Trinity Plaza was a major victory for its tenants. They stopped the demolition of their 360-unit home at Eighth and Market streets. Owner Angelo Sangiacomo later agreed to make 360 of the 1,900 proposed units rent-controlled with lifetime leases, and of the remainder, 12% are to be affordable.

Dodge said he would visit San Francisco as often as possible. ■

Model SoMa pot club sets pace for new permit process

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Maitri, a residential care provider for patients with late-stage AIDS, and Friends of Victoria Manalo Draves Park thanked Nolin for \$500 donations and the Academy of Sciences for his gift of \$1,000.

Nolin offered the commission glowing letters from Annalita, the restaurant next door, and his landlord who cited his dependability and sensitivity to the neighborhood.

Laura Weil, a mother of three who lives on Tehama Street, had her doubts when the Green Door arrived "when marijuana dispensaries were operating as though it was the wild, wild West," she wrote. But Nolin assuaged her safety concerns.

"The effort the Green Door has put into security is remarkable and has done much to put me at ease," she wrote. "I appreciate their efforts to be a good neighbor."

OUTREACH, OUTREACH, MORE OUTREACH

Weil was responding to informational letters that City Planning sent Nolin's neighbors on Dec. 12. As required for a permit, 500 letters went to residents, tenants and property owners within a 300-foot radius. Then, Nolin said, he got "daily" phone calls objecting to his pharmacy. But through "educating" conversations, he said, he was able to turn people around.

Nolin extended his outreach in January. He gave presentations to a senior group at Woolf House, and at a meeting of the Alliance for a Better District 6 the night before his hearing where he patiently fielded a score of questions. He assured a crowd of 35 that although the state allows multiple visits a day to dispensaries to buy the ounce maximum of marijuana

each time, Green Door limits customers to one visit a day. More, he said, is egregious.

SOUTHSIDE

To keep his Green Door menu away from the public eye, Nolin said his only advertising is posting flyers in other dispensaries. And to protect his customers, because marijuana sale and use is a federal crime, he scrambles their sign-in ID numbers so they can't be identified if federal agents seize his records.

Neighbors Joseph Gipson and his wife Heather were the only ones at the hearing who were opposed. They have three children under 5 and walk them down Howard past the Green Door to the carousel in Yerba Buena Park and a day care center. They were "horrified" to learn the Green Door was there. There are enough pot clubs already, the Gipsons said.

A few Green Door supporters reeled at the attitude. A man calling himself StarChild said future generations will look back "in stark disbelief," that such a facility would be opposed. Tammie Golyin was "shocked." She said the couple's "uneducated comments" made her "sick."

Green Door employee and patient Rachel Walker, a graduate student who lives a block away,

said she was pleased with her pay and medical benefits, and her employer's policies: "Anyone suspected of resale (has their membership) revoked," she said.

Denise Dorey, who has neck and back problems, said she is happy to live nearby. "The Green Door has been my saving grace. It's a gem South of Market and adds good character to the neighborhood."

The owner of Green Cross, Kevin Reed, who wanted to move his 22nd Street pot club near Fisherman's Wharf but was turned down last year because of neighborhood opposition, said Green Door is operated by "wonderful people running a model facility."

After public comments closed, commission counsel Badiner advised that the new law prohibits on-site smoking within 1,000 feet of a school or recreational center and "for now, we need to limit the smoking." The Green Door complied and has curtailed smoking on site — for now.

Commissioner Christina Olague, who favored the permit, said she had "no idea what a discreet operation" it is until she visited recently for a tour. Nolin agreed to her suggestion that he meet with the supervisors to amend the smoking law because his ventilation system expels it through the roof.

"I'm not sure why it has to be consumed on site," said Commissioner Michael Antonini. "I'm concerned with driving on roads after they've consumed a product."

Doctors recommend whether pot is to be smoked on site, Nolin said.

Nolin said his employees, who are patients as well, take BART or carpool. "They don't medicate and drive," he said. He knew of no traffic accidents in two years involving anyone leaving the dispensary.

The Green Door also sells edibles. Nolin estimated that of his 40-100 customers a day, 20% — some unable to smoke — buy edibles. It takes an on-site consumer an hour or two to feel the effect, he said.

"I have issues about consuming and being under the influence near kids and driving," said Commission President Dwight Alexander. "I support no (on-site) consumption."

"People leave medicated all the time," Olague said. "I leave medicated when I go to Kaiser (for migraines)."

The commissioners were impressed that the pharmacy had no "red flags" with the police or any city department.

A motion to prohibit consuming any product at the Green Door failed on a 3-4 vote. Then, consistent with the law, the commissioners voted 6-1 to prohibit on-site smoking. But they excused the pharmacy from having to return for a hearing if Nolin gets the supervisors to amend the ordinance regarding on-site smoking within two years.

WHAT'S INSIDE THE GREEN DOOR

Anyone arriving at the Green Door is seen by two cameras. The images show up on monitors on the other side of the door and in the office. When a

patient is buzzed into a small anteroom, a seated employee writes down the patient's card number and assigns him or her a number for the day. Another camera, one of 16 Nolin has in a half dozen rooms, observes this. On a wall, a sign advertises an eighth-ounce for \$45 and claims that the Green Door has the lowest prices in town.

Buzzed through a second door puts a patient into the Bud Bar, a clean, well-lighted 20-by-20-foot room with high ceilings. On one wall are framed pictures from a Marijuana Policy Project Foundation fundraiser at the Playboy Mansion and one of a smiling state Sen. Migden inside the Green Door with Nolin.

A smoking counter with four folding chairs runs along two walls and ends at a water cooler. For sale in a glass case against another wall are green T-shirts and sweatshirts with the Green Door logo.

But directly across the room is the Bud Bar where one of Nolin's 10 employees sits behind a 3-inch-thick bulletproof glass window. He pushes marijuana and edibles under the glass for cash like selling a movie ticket. The adjacent massive door is kept locked and the light wood paneling surrounding it all has 1/4-inch steel plate behind it.

"Even the police say we have good security," Nolin said. "Our head of security worked at the Pacific Coast Stock Exchange. We have regular robbery drills, you know, just so we know what to do. Every room has a panic button that goes to the Police Department."

Above the glass is a menu board where 12 varieties of marijuana are on sale. Three more will be added later in the day, Nolin said. Some names are Dark Star, Bubble Gum, White Rhino and Maui Wowie. At the top, Purple Cream sells for \$45 for an eighth of an ounce, \$90 for a quarter, \$180 for a half and for an ounce, \$350, the maximum for any. Needy regular customers can get a gratis bud or two to tide them over, Nolin said, "but it's not something we advertise."

The Green Door also sells kief and hashish and a wide selection of marijuana-laced edibles such as milk chocolate truffles, cookies, Rice Krispies, tincture (a concentrate with alcohol). An 8-inch carrot cake 2 inches high and 2 inches wide sells for \$8.

The edibles, approved by the Department of Public Health, are checked in DPH visits twice a year.

In back, down a wide hallway, is a large office, a room to meet with growers and an ADA-accessible bathroom.

"People think it's a cash cow," Nolin said, "but I'd be broke if it weren't for my other businesses." He has silk screen and car detailing businesses.

Nolin said he grosses about \$2,000 a day — doesn't charge sales tax but pays it to the state anyway — and pays a whopping \$7,000 monthly rent.

Previously, Nolin had a pot club in Oakland for

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

TIMOTHY DES VOIGNES
Waiter

Timothy Des Voignes, a quiet 25-year-old who seemed to be getting his life together, became the second resident at The Star Hotel on Mission Street in 10 months to take his own life, by leaping from a Tenderloin garage roof six days before Christmas.

Mr. des Voignes moved into The Star near 18th Street in September, aided by a program of the city's South of Market Mental Health Service that supports the homeless. Diagnosed as paranoid-schizophrenic, he began receiving SSI.

Dark-haired, slightly built, Mr. Des Voignes had apparently been happily working as a waiter two days a week and anticipated being hired part time at a restaurant he liked better, said his case manager, Ross Nelson of Baker Places. He bought a skateboard and it became his recreational passion.

On Dec. 19, Mr. Des Voignes went to the Downtown Center Garage, across the street from the Hilton Hotel at Mason and O'Farrell streets. He took the elevator up eight stories to the roof, went to the building's edge overlooking Mason. It was 2:30 p.m. He set down his skateboard and backpack and jumped.

Salim Perez saw it. He works at GoCar Rental at the garage in a small, glass-enclosed office by the sidewalk. He can see up and down Mason, and he saw the young man plummet and, clearing the eight-foot sidewalk, land in the street 50 yards away. A small crowd gathered as Perez ran to the spot.

"To be out that far, he didn't fall," Perez said. "He leaped. The security guard found his things on the roof. I was really affected. I closed up the shop and went home."

On Jan. 4, The Star held a memorial service with 15 residents, hotel employees, mental health workers and Mr. Des Voignes' case worker present.

"He was a nice young kid," said desk clerk Patricia Abrams. "Reticent and shy, no problems, and one of our best tenants. He didn't really hang out with people."

In April, Abrams had shared similar sentiments in a memorial for artist Masahiro Okada who had been at The Star nine months and a client of the city's Mission Mental Health program when he hanged himself in his room. It shook up the hotel residents. The Department of Public Health held grievance sessions for them.

Mr. Okada was 40 and a loner who, known to no one, had filled his room with pictures of delicate flowers he had painted. But he couldn't patch things up with his parents about being gay.

The hotel asked the Rev. Glenda Hope to con-

duct his memorial. Afterward, she and three others went upstairs and with their hands on the door of 318, Mr. Okada's room, blessed it, a practice she said that can make it right for those who might feel a suicide room is "haunted" or "bad luck." Mr. des Voignes' room was 311.

Mr. Des Voignes was born in Hayward but raised in Amador County where he was a Boy Scout, then a member of the Amador High School wrestling team and the school band. After graduating, he did a stint in the Navy, got an AA degree from College of Dupage in Illinois and attended the University of Illinois. Then he headed back West.

"I never saw him depressed," said his case worker Nelson. "Quiet, yes, but no sign he was suicidal. He wanted to be a waiter. And he always responded to our outreach. He was near my age (22) and I liked working with him. Things were on the up and up."

The Rev. Hope conducted his memorial, too.

"We can never know what's in someone's mind unless we put it out there," she said. "Maybe his final gift is a message for us to be open to each other, to take the risk. Some will take the time to listen. There are people in this room who will listen when things are too heavy to carry. This is a very young man and it is very sad."

Mr. Des Voignes' mother, Michel Des Voignes, came from Pine Grove to remove his personal effects on Dec. 29.

—TOM CARTER

**MARK SIMON
ANDY FARLEY
GEORGE ALLEN VOLANTE SR.**
Tenderloin Health memorial for 3

"Our years are soon gone. . ." spoke Father John Hardin, executive director of St. Anthony Foundation, at a Dec. 13 memorial for Andy Farley, Mark Simon and George Volante, three Tenderloin Health clients who died in November and December.

The memorial, held at Tenderloin Health's offices at 183 Golden Gate, drew 30 people, and was officiated by Hardin and the Rev. Glenda Hope, director of S.F. Network Ministries. Song was provided by Laura Fannon, a member of Threshold Choirs, a Bay Area group founded 10 years ago to comfort dying and grieving people.

Mr. Farley was well-known to many at the memorial, who recalled him as cheerful and honest about the AIDS he had lived with for many years. His home was the Ambassador Hotel, where an estimated 80% of residents have AIDS or are HIV-positive, Hope said. She conducts a drop-in chaplaincy at the hotel and had known Mr. Farley for 20 years. She admired that he always "was who he was."

Hardin also had stayed in touch with Mr. Farley all those years, he said. "Andy struggled, but he was always up and cheerful. I remember a last conversation — he told me that his time was short. He fought the good fight."



Winter holidays no trigger for suicides

Stats show spring the peak months, but no studies as to why

BY TOM CARTER

It's a media-driven myth that more suicides occur during the winter holidays than at any other time of year, facts mirrored by the number of calls for help to San Francisco Suicide Prevention's crisis line as well as a nationwide study.

"The most (suicides) are in April," Suicide Prevention Executive Director Eve Meyer said in an interview. "And even though we get fewer calls starting in November, and trailing off in December, these calls are very worrisome."

"The rest of the year, people are often calling back to say that they are okay. But we have very few of those in December. That's when people who call are in tremendous pain."

There's no scientific explanation for the pattern, Meyer said, because no one has investigated it.

The fewest suicides occur in November, December and January, according to a study released in December 2000 by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania. The most suicides occur in April, May and June with the peak at the end of April 1996, the latest year that monthly figures were gleaned from the National Center for Health Statistics.

In her experience, the pattern has held true for 20 years, Meyer said.

But that apparently varies in San Francisco. Statistics from 2001-04, the most recent available from the medical examiner's Web site, show that

April along with December averaged less than eight suicides. In separate years, March, August and twice September led in suicides; the average was 13. San Francisco's annual suicide average was 106.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funded the Annenberg national report to explore the way the media characterized suicide during the winter holidays.

In 67 stories reporting suicides between Nov. 8, 1999, and Jan. 15, 2000, more than half (55%) attributed suicides to the "holiday blues." When there are "no suicides on a holiday," the report said, "news accounts tend to express surprise."

Moreover, "only 25% of the stories identified depression or other chronic mental-health conditions as the most common underlying cause of suicide," even though most people who commit suicide have been diagnosed as mentally ill, it said.

There's no scientific explanation why spring is the peak time for suicide, Meyer said, but funding a study to find out why isn't likely.

"Suicide still has old religious attitudes attached to it involving sin and guilt," she said. "It's shamed-based and people don't talk about it. The government figures they'd kill themselves anyway. So it doesn't study suicide like it does the causes of other diseases, like cancer. But there was a time when no one talked about cancer, either."

Founded in 1963, the agency's 150 trained volunteers provide suicide prevention and more generalized counseling 24 hours a day. The crisis line is: 781-0500, and, toll-free, 1-800-273-TALK. ■

Two of Mr. Farley's friends elaborated on his optimism.

"He was a really good man and he's won the race that we're still running," said one. "He wouldn't want us to be unhappy."

"Andy was always kind," said another. "I never heard a cross word from him — there aren't many people you can say that about."

Hank Wilson, a Tenderloin Health community center support worker, called him "demanding but patient, sensitive and never a whiner. And he was out in the community — where he wanted to be — until the end."

Mr. Farley died Nov. 22. He was 47.

Perri Franskoviak, Tenderloin Health's behavioral health services manager, said there was much to admire in the three men being honored at the memorial. "I remember Andy brought me his autobiography to read one day. He was so genuine, and that was probably true of Mark and George, too. I honor that."

Mr. Simon, who died in early December, was 46.

"Mark was pleasant, even on his worse days — he could always conjure up a smile from you," said Angela Griffin, his former case manager. "He also was very bright and really interested in maintaining his independence. Everyone liked him."

Mr. Volante died Nov. 9 at age 41. Five of his relatives attended the memorial, including one of his sisters, Pamela Cachay of San Mateo, and three of her seven children. Still overcome with grief, she said little publicly: "George was my best friend. I just hope he's happy."

Later, however, she privately shared stories of her brother's and her own hard life — one that ended for him when he hung himself in his room at the Sunset Hotel, 161 Sixth St. "People need to know," she said.

"We were so close. He was only 11 months older than me and we were raised pretty much together, in Minneapolis, in a dysfunctional family. After our mother abandoned us, we were sent to foster care in California."

It was 1981, and the two teenagers essentially raised themselves, she said. When they aged out of foster care, they hit the streets in San Francisco and soon were officially homeless.

"We hustled, though never together, but we watched out for each other always. He was in prison, in and out, and he was depressed and he was HIV-positive. He tried to jump off the bridge a few times."

But in the last two years, he'd stayed out of prison, she said. "I was so proud of him. He no longer seemed angry and scared. He had a girlfriend, and they wanted to get married after her divorce came through."

It wasn't enough. His girlfriend discovered his body.

Ms. Cachay was notified of the circumstances of her brother's death, but not where it had happened.

"I knew it was on Sixth Street so I went to one hotel and asked, 'Was there a hanging here yesterday?' They said, 'No, try next door.'"

After several tries, she found the Sunset. She later realized that some people she'd approached didn't connect the hanging with the name George Volante. "They only knew him by the name 'Regulator,'" she said.

"I don't think anyone realized things were so bad with him. But we should have known. There's a family history of depression. I think: There but for the grace of God go I. I've been clean and sober for years. I was rescued — he wasn't."

Mr. Volante is survived by a 17-year-old son, George Allen Volante Jr., who lives in Alameda, five sisters, his birth mother, and 14 nieces and nephews. He was buried in Minnesota.

—MARJORIE BEGGS

Green Door pot club approved

▶ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

nine months and was paying \$1,400 a month, he said. He got approvals from the proper city agencies and waited for a go-ahead conference with City Administrator Deborah Edgerly that never came.

"But she was not dealing with any of the dispensaries," Nolin said. "I couldn't take any more losses so I left and came here."

"What I like about San Francisco is that people do what they say they'll do. They follow the regulations and that I can understand."

"We have an excellent blueprint," he said. "And if the city wants more dispensaries we can provide them with the right way to do it. I've learned a lot and because I've done it myself, I've probably saved myself \$50,000 in lawyers' fees." ■

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SPECIAL EVENTS

A free weekend at the academy. District 6 residents can enjoy their turn of free admission at the California Academy of Sciences in the 800 block of Howard Street on Feb. 16, 17 and 18, as part of the rotating Neighborhood Free Days program established eight years ago. Free admission is by ZIP code. With valid ID such as driver's license or utility bill, these ZIP codes work: 94103, 94107, 94130, 94111, 94105, 94108, 94104 & 94102. Accompanying children (up to age 17) do not need ID.

COMMUNITY: REGULAR SCHEDULE

HOUSING

Supportive Housing Network, 4th Thursday of the month, 3-5 p.m., location TBA. Contact: Alecia Hopper, 421-2926 x302.

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, 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 Thursday of the month, 1-3 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. Focus on increasing supportive home and community-based services, expanded eligibility for home care and improved discharge planning. Light lunch served. Call: Aaron Wagner, 703-0188 x304.

Hoarders and Clutterers Support Group, 2nd Monday and 4th Wednesday of each month, 6-7 p.m. 870 Market, Suite 928. Call: 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 Ill-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

Crime and Safety Committee meets bimonthly on the Wednesday after the first Monday, SOMPAC, 1035 Folsom, 6 p.m. Information: 487-2166 or www.sompac.com.

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 Lisa Block, 538-8100 ext. 202 or Lblock@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. Districtwide association, civic education.

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 at the Neighborhood Parks Council, 621-3260.

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.

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, activities and improvements. Contact: 552-4866.

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: 554-9532

Mid-Market Project Area Committee, 2nd Wednesday of the month, 5:30 p.m., Ramada Hotel, 1231 Market. Contact Carolyn Diamond, 362-2500. Market Street redevelopment on Fifth to Tenth streets.

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, 1st Thursday of the month, noon. Call Elaine Zamora, 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. Call: SOMPAC office, 487-2166.

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 Committee Daly, Dufty, Peskin, Thursday, 1 p.m.

City Services Committee McGoldrick, Dufty, Ma, first and third Monday, 1 p.m.

Land Use Committee Maxwell, Sandoval, McGoldrick, Wednesday, 1 p.m.



TENDERLOIN HEALTH Outreach and Community Events February 2007

Health Promotion Forum

Topic: Addiction and Buprenorphine Treatment

Speaker: Ellen Catalina

Date/Time: Wednesday, February 21, 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm

HIV Treatment Forum

Topic: MRSA and You — What You Need to Know

Speaker: Andrew Reynolds

Date/Time: Wednesday, February 28, 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm

Client Advisory Panel

Come talk with Tenderloin Health's Executive Director and program managers about plans for Tenderloin Health. Also provide input on new services and how we can improve.

Date/Time: Wednesday, February 14, 11:30 am - 1 pm;
Wednesday, February 28, 11:30 am - 1 pm

Volunteer and Intern for Tenderloin Health

Orientation: Sunday, February 11, 12 pm - 6:30 pm

220 Golden Gate Ave., 3rd Floor
lunch provided

You must preregister for volunteer trainings.
Stop in/call Emilie (415) 934-1792.

For current groups' schedule or for more information
call: 415.431.7476 or go to www.tenderloinhealth.org

TENDERLOIN HEALTH

A MERGER OF CONTINUUM AND THE TENDERLOIN AIDS RESOURCE CENTER

PROGRAMS • 415.431.7476 and 415.437.2900

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE • 255 Golden Gate Ave • San Francisco CA 94102

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