

# Landlord pulls plug on Mason Street pot club

Dispensary mainly serves residents of Tenderloin SROs

BY TOM CARTER

**M**EGA-LANDLORD CitiApartments withdrew its support of a license for a Mason Street marijuana dispensary in one of its buildings, claiming it hadn't known the pot club even existed, although the landlord had signed off on it.

The Planning Commission was set to approve the application for the 120-24 Mason Street Dispensary when the application was pulled after Planning received a letter dated May 4 from the landlord's lawyer saying the pot club was unauthorized.

But the dispensary's owner, Tariq Alazraie of Cafe.com, asked the commission on May 17 to instead hold the application in abeyance to give him time to try to change the landlord's mind — and he was hoping to avoid paying another \$6,691 for a new application fee. The commission complied.

CitiApartments, also known as Skyline Realty, is the empire of 89-year-old, Mission District-born Frank Lembi. Skyline owns about 150 buildings all over the city, mostly apartments, also including eight hotels and a couple of office buildings. The city attorney sued Skyline and CitiApartments in August allegedly for illegally converting residential hotel rooms at the Gaylord Hotel, four blocks from the dispensary, into tourist rooms after intimidating tenants to vacate, then charging four times the rental rate, breaking multiple state and local laws.

In 2005, the Board of Supervisors passed tough rules to control the growth spurt of pot clubs. More than 30 previously licensed dispensaries must reapply to the commission before June 30 if they want to stay open. The first to apply, Green Cross, was turned down for a dis-

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PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

**Owner Tariq Alazraie** is inside Cafe.com with the window to the dispensary in the rear.

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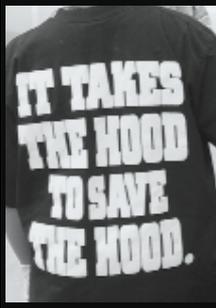
PUBLISHED BY THE SAN FRANCISCO STUDY CENTER

JUNE 2007

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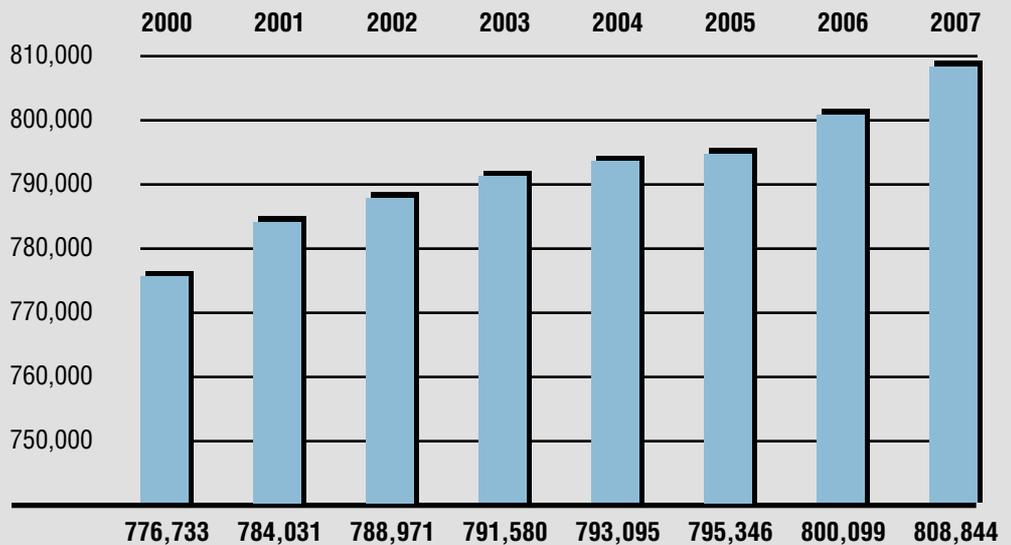
# CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

## CALIFORNIA'S COUNT

### SAN FRANCISCO POPULATION GROWTH



Source: California Department of Finance

The state keeps track of each county's population and annually reports the change.

# Pop. 808,844

## S.F. still growing and U.S. census starting to adjust

BY TOM CARTER

**T**HE California Department of Finance estimates that San Francisco has a record 808,844 population and has been growing steadily since 2000. At the same time, the U.S. census has been showing shrinking numbers — 50,000 or more each year since 2004, saddling San Francisco with the image of a major city on the decline like Boston.

So who's right?

Neither the state nor the U.S. census staff wants to claim victory. But in 2000 the state started with the feds' count of 776,733 people in San Francisco and made its annual estimates, county by county, using many different ways to calculate the comings and goings of the populace. The state's more meticulous system suggests its number-crunching is closer to reality.

For sure, San Francisco is no longer shrinking. Even the feds, as of June 1, now seem to agree. After meeting with the state's demographic experts in November, the census folks reversed their string of five declining estimates and pegged San Francisco's population at 744,041, up from 739,426 where it had bottomed out the year before. (See graph on P. 4.)

Outside a Mission district political rally

on June 2, Mayor Gavin Newsom was asked if he knew the city's population. He shot back:

"No one does. There are about five different figures floating around — 746,000 is one — but there's not one figure everyone agrees on."

"Would it surprise you to hear the population is 809,000?" the reporter asked.

"No."

Newsom was shaking hands outside before going into the Women's Building auditorium on 18th Street to attend a rally for District Attorney Kamala Harris. The Central City Extra explained that the figure came from the California Department of Finance.

"It's the old census numbers that are contradicted," Newsom said. "I always say it's between 750,000 and 800,000. Now you've added another number. And I'm going to quote you." He added with a grin, "I like the higher numbers. I never did subscribe to the decline." Then he turned and went inside.

Wide disparities concern both the state and the feds, especially the gap in California's population. The Finance Department has California at 37.7 million, 1.2 million more than the U.S. census.

Finance and census staffs began meeting last November to discuss this embarrassment. Comparing the complicated methodologies will lead to changes, state sources say. It will save some professional face and get federal funding streams — that include state population in their formulas — on a more accurate track.

A range of implications accompanies an accurate population count, from how peo-

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# New group on disabilities

*Plans to tackle pedestrian safety first, then a list of gripes*

BY PHIL TRACY

THE Community Leadership Alliance has formed a seven-member Tenderloin Disability Council, Edward Evans announced at the May Tenderloin Futures Collaborative meeting.

“We’re going to be focusing first on pedestrian safety,” Evans said. “We have a problem with people riding bicycles and skateboards on the sidewalks.”

Another issue is homeless people monopolizing bus shelters, denying their use to the elderly and disabled. “We also have concerns about conditions of the sidewalks in the neighborhood and the condition of our crosswalks,” said Evans, TL resident and former member of the Mayor’s Disability Council.

Evans also said the group would try to improve access to health care for seniors and disabled people. And he complained about the scarcity of accessible housing. “Some of the SROs, the way they were constructed, do not permit wheelchairs and persons with big walkers to have access.” He cited the need to widen the aisles in Tenderloin stores, too.

David Villa-Lobos, Community Leadership Alliance director, added that the Tenderloin Disability Council would work with the Mayor’s Office on Disability, reporting to it monthly. Susan Mizner, director of the Mayor’s Office on Disability, later told *The Extra*: “I was not aware of any scheduled reports, but we certainly can work with the Tenderloin Disability Council if that seems a good way of communicating.”

## REC & PARK’S MAN IN TL

Next up was Karen Mauney-Brodek of Rec and Park. She identified herself as a member of the year-old Rec and Park planning group, currently trying to estimate how many gardeners it takes to properly maintain all the city’s parks.

Mauney-Brodek said that the recreation staff and the maintenance staff previously were managed by two different groups. “What we have started to do really is manage on a

geographic level,” she said. “We’ve divided the city into zones and we have a neighborhood service area manager for each zone.” She identified the Tenderloin as Steven Cismowski’s district. She said if there is a problem at any of the Tenderloin parks, he’s the man to contact: 831-6358 or [steven.cismowski@sfgov.org](mailto:steven.cismowski@sfgov.org).

## COLLABORATIVE’S FUTURE

Tomiquia Moss of TNDC, who also serves as the Futures Collaborative recording secretary, said she’ll send a survey to the people who’ve attended the meetings over the years to find out if the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative concept “still works.” She cited concern about the drop in attendance in recent months.

“We want to find out if this is still serving its purpose and if not, what we want to do. We want to be sure we are maximizing the use of this time,” Moss said. “Mostly it’s been a place where community members can come and hear about projects and different things happening in the neighborhood.”

Mark Aaronson, director of Hastings Law School’s Civil Justice Clinic, cast a hopeful light on the Collaborative’s future. “Don’t underestimate the impact we can have on such projects as the California Pacific Medical Center – the environmental review and permit review is up now. What should be the role of a major medical facility in this neighborhood? The developers have addressed this group. They are inviting input. They don’t want community opposition. There really is an opportunity.”

“It’s a good time, actually,” Aaronson continued. “I’m going on 25 or 30 years involved in the Tenderloin. There’s no real fault that I can see for the decline in attendance. We know what should be done – we need more outreach to residents as well as community organizations.”

Aaronson sees the Collaborative as providing an important function: “I continue to come and want my law students to continue to come because this has been the best place to figure out what’s really going on and what our priorities should be.” ■



Michael Nulty (left) and his brother, John, flank Alan Klaum, former MHA board president, at the Mental Health Association’s Awards Luncheon.

# Michael Nulty honored as mental health champion

*Other TL awards to Zamora, Rev. Hope*

BY TOM CARTER

THREE Tenderloin movers and shakers received awards in May from citywide organizations for their longtime work in the neighborhood.

The Mental Health Association of San Francisco bestowed its Champion Award on omnipresent neighborhood activist Michael Nulty at its 60th anniversary Awards Luncheon. Safety Network, in honoring individuals from 12 neighborhoods, recognized community benefit district Manager Elaine Zamora. And the Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corp. presented its second annual Kelly Cullen Community Service Award to the Rev. Glenda Hope of Network Ministries.

Nulty graduated from one of MHA’s early Tenant Leadership Training programs and went on to co-found the Tenant Associations Coalition. Based in the Tenderloin, TAC is a support organization for tenant leaders in SROs and apartment buildings. It meets monthly to grapple with quality-of-life issues. TAC also has sponsored two community leadership summits.

Zamora, a lawyer and property owner who is the salaried manager of the Tenderloin-North of Market Community Benefits District, was honored at a May 9 reception in the State Building for her work to improve public safety.

The Rev. Hope created San Francisco Network Ministries in the TL in 1972 and ministers to the poor, sick and dying. She has been conducting memorial services in TL SROs since the late 1970s. Hope was recognized at TNDC’s 26th birthday celebration and fundraiser at the Hilton Hotel on May 22. Her award is named for Cullen, the former executive director and founder in 1981 of the nonprofit housing builder and manager that serves 2,400 tenants, most living in the Tenderloin.

Nulty, TAC’s executive director, told the MHA luncheon crowd of more than 300 at the Merchants Exchange Building that the award was the most prestigious he has received in 30 years of community service.

In those years, Nulty counts 56 organizations, projects and campaigns he started or helped initiate, 22 of them in the Tenderloin where he has lived in SROs the last 10 years. The organizations include the Larkin Street Youth Center and the Mayor’s Office of Children, Youth and Family. He is president of the Alliance for a Better District 6, which he founded eight years ago, and is on the benefit district board, having served on the committee that founded it. Last year he received the Mayor’s Disability Council Award for Excellence.

As a result of the MHA award, Nulty also received a congressional commendation from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, two state Senate commendations and one from the State Board of Equalization.

Nulty and his twin brother, John, appear frequently at Board of Supervisors’ and committee meetings to lobby for neighborhood improvements and often share organizing chores.

MHA Executive Director Belinda Lyons introduced Supervisor Bevan Dufty, who presented her with a state commendation for the organization’s accomplishments since 1947.

“And I am thrilled that Barbara Garcia and Michael Nulty are being honored today,” he told the crowd. “Michael and his brother don’t see the Tenderloin as a dumping ground.”

Garcia, the deputy director of Public Health, received the Public Policy Leader award. She spearheaded San Francisco’s 40-member task force to determine the county’s mental health needs under state Proposition 63 — the 2005 Mental Health Services Act — and how to use the funds. The group conducted 70 community outreach meetings.

Also honored were Wells Fargo Bank as Corporate Leader and the California Endowment as Foundation Leader. Through the bank’s Team Member Giving program, scores of employees donate and volunteer at MHA-SF. A bank employee, Stacy Fisher, serves on the MHA board and the bank was a sponsor of the luncheon. The California Endowment awarded the MHA a three-year grant to help educate mental health consumers on preventive care, and is a leading funder of mental health programs in the state. ■

*John Goins contributed to this story.*



**CENTRAL CITY EXTRA** is published monthly by San Francisco Study Center Inc., a private nonprofit serving the community since 1972. The Extra was initiated through grants from the S.F. Hotel Tax Fund and the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund. It is now assisted by the Kosblan Committee of the San Francisco Foundation, which funds the Southside coverage. The contents are copyrighted by the San Francisco Study Center, 1095 Market Street, Suite 601, San Francisco, CA 94103.

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**DISTRIBUTION:** Itzhak Volansky

**EDITORIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE:** David Baker, Michael Nulty, Debbie Larkin, Nicholas Rosenberg, Brad Paul, Tariq Alazraie

Central City Extra is a member of the  
SAN FRANCISCO NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION



**"Okay, people, let's green!"** SoMa residents, students and children grab brooms and pitch in at Asian Neighborhood Design's cleanup effort in and around Minna and Russ streets. It was the first community cleanup of the area and the first sponsored by AND. The largest contingent, from United Players, wore "Save the hood" T-shirts.

## 60 volunteers clean SoMa street to Latin beat

BY PHIL TRACY

### SOUTHSIDE

THE first community cleanup day of a small slice of SoMa took place May 31 as 60 or so people gathered at Tutubi Park, at the corner of Russ and Minna streets. Sponsored by Asian Neighborhood Design, the cleanup was restricted to Minna between Sixth and Seventh streets and the stretch of Russ between Minna and Howard.

The work force was composed of neighborhood volunteers, including residents of Minna Park family housing complex, a 26-unit building along with Tutubi Park, which was built by AND in 1999. Other agencies providing volunteers included the Safety Network, the Department of Public Works, Rec and Park and the Employment Training Center trainees of AND, whose program teaches building skills, chiefly for use in the construction industry.

A major contributor to the turnout, according to AND's Nicole Combs Walker, who organized the event, was United Players, a SoMa program of violence prevention and leadership training that put 25 to 30 young people to work. Rudy Corpuz, founding director, referred to his group as "a tribe" and said its mission is to "save our communities." The sentiment is best summed up by the slogan on the group's black T-shirt, "It takes the hood to save the hood."

They swept streets, painted over graffiti, touched up the park fence and cleaned up the park. After introducing city officials and the seven team leaders, Walker thanked the AND Latin house band and said, "Okay people, let's green."

Grant Din, executive director of Asian Neighborhood Design, said this was the group's first time organizing a cleanup in SoMa, though AND had participated in cleanups in other neighborhoods.

He said the group recently relocated to 1021 Mission St. and had worked with several other architectural projects in SoMa besides the Minna Park family housing complex.

Tutubi Park is private, a part of the housing complex and designed as one of

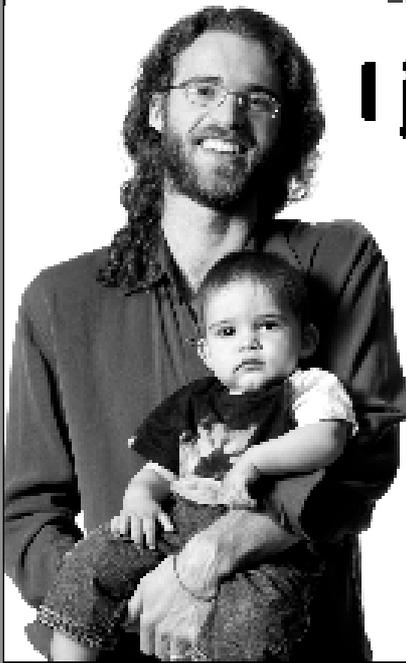
the housing's main egresses. Thus, city rules prohibited Rec and Park from taking the park over, Din said. It serves as a semi-private park for the project residents who each has a key. The fence is not to keep the neighborhood out but to provide security for the children, including those who do not live in the complex, playing within it, Din said.

Din said Asian Neighborhood Design started in 1973 by several Asian students from U.C. Berkeley who wanted to increase affordable urban housing stock. It eventually moved to San Francisco and has recently worked on such varied projects as Friendship House American Indian Healing

Center on Julian Street in the Mission and renovating the façade of the Faithful Fools offices and copy shop in the Tenderloin.

In addition to architect design and employment training, Din said AND has programs in family and youth resources, including an after school homework club with 15 to 20 students, and a community planning program that has produced a 2005 demographic survey of San Francisco's eastern neighborhoods ("There Goes the Neighborhood") and neighborhood profiles of both SoMa and the Tenderloin in 2004.

All publications, plus The Material Handbook, "to share knowledge about building materials and design strategies ... for low income people in San Francisco" are downloadable for free from AND's Web site [www.andnet.org](http://www.andnet.org) in pdf format. ■



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# Newsom: 'I never did subscribe to

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ple feel about a city that's growing — or shriveling — to the revenue streams from the U.S. government to the state, and from the state to cities, counties and regions.

For the U.S. census to change to Department of Finance methodologies, says Mary Heim, DOF's chief of Demographic Research, would "somewhat" affect money coming to the state. "Often population plays a small part (in the formulas). It's hard to put a dollar amount on it."

The city broke 800,000 in 2006. Its previous high mark was 798,300 in July 1954, according to DOF records researched by Daniel Sheya, DOF's head of city estimates.

By law, the scores of federal revenue streams that come to the state and in some cases counties, cities and regional governments, employ the U.S. census population numbers in complex formulas. Likewise, the state revenue streams to counties, cities and regional entities use the DOF population figures, as all state departments and agencies

have been required to do by law since the 1950s.

The California population disparity is so great — 3% statewide and 8.7% for San Francisco — that the state and federal experts met in November to begin an unprecedented communication to get on the same page, or at least in the same chapter. They want to revise their methodologies to bring them closer.

"The numbers are really different and we are all professionals," Heim said. "We want the best estimates possible."

Heim attended the Sacramento meeting, requested by the U.S. census staff. It has led to biweekly phone conferences, she said, far more communication than any time since 1996, when the two departments first began discussing differing methodologies.

"No. 1 is to understand the methods being used because we are not on the same page," she said. "Once that's done then we can look further into the data sources. They (the feds) seem to have taken more interest lately."

A report in April from the Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy, entitled "Which Population Estimates Are Best?" tells how the federal government strayed with confusing numbers. The center has been a source for investors, businesses and public agencies for 35 years and fingered the culprit as estimations of out-migration.

The U.S. census reported that, from 2000 to 2006, California had a net loss of 1 million residents, the article said, "unusual in a growing economy." In the same time, the Department of Finance reported a small positive immigration from other states.

"While it is possible that high housing prices currently may lead to increased out-migration," it said, "the Census data says large out-migration was occurring during the period while housing markets were surging."

Center Director Stephen Levy mentioned other factors that shore up the case for the state's estimates.

"The DOF numbers are more compatible with what we see with (the growth of) jobs and income," Levy told The Extra.

The article's bottom line was that "the DOF estimates are based on a richer methodology and are more consistent with recent economic and housing market trends."

"It became an issue because we have 1 million more people living in California than the census does," said Sheya. "We're getting too far apart. Our first meeting with them was in November. They don't want California to challenge the federal estimates. It would be a lot for them to adjust."

"So we're working on it. But nothing is solved. Maybe they can use some of our data. Now they see where we're coming from."

In an August 2005 story on the census controversy, The Extra reported the DOF's Jan. 1, 2005, population estimate for San Francisco was 799,263 and growing. At that time, it was 55,000 more than the feds' count.

Each decade, the feds announce the long-awaited census count. Then annually they revisit their methodology to tweak and refine it. Each decade, too, the state of California takes the census figure as a benchmark and, working backward, revises its estimates in relation to it. (The city's former high mark in 1954, for example, was revised much lower after the 1960 census.)

The Census Bureau operates nationally and relies on data sources that are uniform across the country. Its "immigration data" includes immigration from foreign countries and also compares federal tax data — address and exemption information from IRS Form 1040.

The state relies heavily on Department of Motor Vehicles statistics, while the feds put their emphasis on tax returns. "And they are different populations," Sheya says.

After each U.S. census, the DOF resumes its methodology, making annual estimates until the next benchmark, when the cycle repeats. In 2010, the two departments will be on the same page, and it will be known if that figure pegs the San Francisco population at over 800,000.

"We don't know if it will reach that," says



# Landlord pulls plug on Ma

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pensary near Fisherman's Wharf because of neighborhood opposition. But five have been approved. Alazraie owns two of them, both licensed in March, at 1328 Grove St. and 208 Valencia St.

His Mason Street Dispensary was considered a lock. It had no problems with the police and had received the commission's preliminary recommendation. A large majority of Alliance for a Better District 6 members, voting in a March poll, favored it.

But CitiApartments' lawyer's letter to the Planning Department "revoked the (current) letter of authorization," which had "been signed without the owner's knowledge," Planner Michael Li, assigned to the project, told The Extra. "Frank Lembi was not aware" the dispensary was there, Li said.

Even so, Alazraie said after the May 17 hearing, he has had "a good relationship with the landlord for four years" while serving 800

patients, 80% of them, he estimates, from Tenderloin SROs.

Alazraie's lease expires at the end of the year. He expected to renew it for five years.

"But I've found that a lot of people don't know we're here," Alazraie added, somewhat surprised.

Low profile, though, is the image the Planning Commission has favored in previous hearings.

Alazraie's Mason Street Dispensary is practically incognito. There's no signage for it in front and it's discreetly located in the back of Café.Com, Alazraie's Internet coffeehouse and juice bar. The dispensary is a converted 8- by 8-foot storage closet. Under its large one-way mirror is a small window with an open space to pass the goods to customers.

Alazraie said when he addressed the Alliance for a Better District 6 meeting on April 10 that the application might face trouble.

"The large hotels like the Hilton don't feel comfortable with a dispensary in the neighbor-

hood," he said. "They are pressuring our landlord who owns eight hotels."

Alazraie said getting through to talk to the hotel owners was "difficult."

"On what basis do the hotels object?" asked one man.

Alazraie said he didn't know. "They are leaning on the landlord," he said. "I don't know what kind of leverage they have. But that's the way they're going about it."

Alazraie later told The Extra that he had talked with people from Parc 55 Hotel, the Union Square Business District and the Market Street Association. None would write him a letter of support, but they wouldn't oppose the application, either, he said.

The rear of Parc 55 is adjacent to Café.Com. The Hilton is a half block away. Its spokeswoman is Debbie Larkin, who serves on The Extra's editorial advisory committee, as does Alazraie.

"The sole problem is the Hilton," Alazraie said. "It called my landlord. I've talked to

# to the decline' in S.F.'s population

Sheya. "But our figures will be revised downward. And the census will be something in between the two numbers."

The state has been revising its figures down for at least two decades, according to Heim. But if the feds change their counting system as a result of the current talks, they may find more people in the city and state than ever before; and 800,000 may hold, she implied.

The accuracy the departments seek is relative. Delayed information habitually compromises it. Heim says California's birth and death reports lag by two to three years.

"And immigration data now is from late 2005-2006 and here we are in mid-2007," she said.

Apparently, the census has yet to catch up with the city's rebound from the population exodus after the dot com bust. And the Chronicle and Associated Press, among other news media, have reported a dipping city population that carries a negative aura that the mayor eschews. But other factors more than made up for the drain, the state says, which has not reported a net loss in any year after April 2000. (See P.1 graph.) Since that time, the U.S. census showed only declines until July 1, 2006, when the feds estimated 744,041, a modest uptick.

DOF's annual report on state, county and city populations in May says San Francisco at the first of the year had grown by 1.1% compared with its historic Jan. 1, 2006, estimate of 800,099 residents — the first time the city had climbed above 800,000.

By California law, all state departments and agencies use DOF figures for determining annual appropriations to city, county and regional jurisdictions, and for research and planning. The federal government, by federal law, uses its census figures to determine distributions to the states and their entities. So if the feds used DOF figures, San Francisco presumably would get millions more from the government. But the population factor is usually buried deep in complex formulas and dollar estimates directly tied to population are hard to cipher.

What causes the gap in estimates is the kinds of data used.

The state uses more factors and has "a closer relationship with local information," is

the way DOF's John Malson, research manager over city estimates, explained the difference in The Extra's August 2005 population story. Rodger Johnson, chief of records and research for the Census Bureau's Population Division, agreed. "The state has data not available to us," he said.

The census uses income tax information and immigration from foreign countries. The state counts births, deaths, driver's licenses, school enrollments, migration, medical aid enrollments and tax returns. Changes to the housing stock are also used. "Estimated occupancy of housing units and the number of persons per household further determine population levels," according to the state's May population report.

The DOF figures are used widely outside of state government. Four examples DOF gave were the Center for the Continuing Study of California's Economy, Rand Corp., the Public Policy Institute of California and the California Research Board. Generally, a city's declining population is less than swell, and not just for business interests.

"Any city needs to show that it's keeping its young and talented people," says Joe D'Alessandro, president of the San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau. "If it's not, it would be one more thing in the mix that people consider in coming here. I don't know the population of Atlanta, but if it's losing population because a lack of quality, it could impact my decision to go there."

"But I've heard the population is on the increase for the first time because of South of Market."

Two years ago, because of SoMa's housing boom, District 6 accounted for 35% of the city's state-estimated growth.

For brochures or promotions, the Convention & Visitors Bureau uses the census figure. Despite the finance department revelation, D'Alessandro said he won't change because "census is what the industry uses," and he wants to maintain consistency.

As the fourth largest city in California, the state reported in May that San Francisco didn't grow as much as No. 3 San Jose (1.6%), but had a higher rate than No. 2 San Diego (0.9%) and Los Angeles (0.9%), which broke the 4 million mark for the first time with 4,018,080. ■

San Francisco population history		
Year	People	U.S. rank
1794	1,056	—
1798	833	—
1800	867	—
1815	1,488	—
1830	350	—
1842	196	—
1844	50	—
1846	200	—
Aug 1847	459	—
Apr 1848	850	—
Jul 1849	5,000	—
Dec 1849	25,000	—
1850	21,000	—
1852	36,151	—
1860	56,802	15
1870	149,473	10
1880	233,959	9
1890	298,997	8
1900	342,782	9
1910	416,912	11
1920	506,676	12
1930	634,394	11
1940	634,536	12
1950	775,357	11
1960	740,316	12
1970	715,674	13
1980	678,974	13
1990	723,959	14
2000	776,733	13

Source: SFgenealogy.com

# son St. pot club

Debbie Larkin and she asks all these 'what if' questions. She wanted to know how we knew these people were sick. That's medical and out of my hands. I've been here four years. I thought she was my asset."

Reached by phone, Larkin told The Extra that she had not been aware the dispensary was there but that the Hilton had "no official position" on the application. And "no," she said, the Hilton had not talked to Skyline about the application.

"If this is going to portray us as anti-people in pain," she added, "that's ridiculous."

The Rev. Cecil Williams of Glide Memorial Methodist Church's seemed to have some leverage. Alazraie said his landlord asked him what Williams had to say about the application.

"We've been donating to Glide for years," Alazraie said. "I've been trying to get a meeting with Cecil for weeks. I'm still trying. He's seen as the Godfather of the neighborhood."

If the application goes back on the calen-

dar it won't be until a month after the department mails 30-day notices.

The city backs the dispensaries but had no firm controls until 18 months ago after the Planning Department suspended the operations of the Green Cross, then located in the Mission. Neighbors complained of crime and noise associated with its client traffic.

"I support medical marijuana but we've put some common sense restrictions on it," Mayor Newsom told a roundtable meeting of the Neighborhood Newspaper Alliance on May 23 in his office. "The bad actors shouldn't be in the business."

The Department of Public Health says 25 other dispensaries have applications pending still to be considered — even after the deadline, if necessary.

Dispensaries originating after April 1, 2005, have to be located in Planning Department-approved areas. The largest section by far is a stretch of the Tenderloin and SoMa in District Six. ■



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

Mason Street marijuana dispensary is inside Cafe.com. The 4-year-old pot club has had no problems with police..

**KAREN WASHINGTON**  
Hospitality House icon

More than 60 mourners jammed the Central City Hospitality House reception room April 26 to bid an emotional farewell to a charismatic woman who transformed herself, becoming a beloved peer counselor to thousands of clients at the Turk Street facility.

For six years, Karen Washington, who insisted on being called "Ms. Washington," was a popular figure at the self-help center that annually serves 6,000 homeless and poor clients. She could handle multiple details at a time. The 5-foot-8, 180-pound transgender woman came to Hospitality House as a client, then became a volunteer and soon a full-time staff member. She left her peer advocate job in July 2004 when she was diagnosed with cancer.

Ms. Washington died April 10, according to the Hospitality House staff, who were notified by the medical examiner looking for next of kin. Ms. Washington was 61. She had lived in the Western Addition for several years.

"Everybody here makes their mark in their way," said Jackie Jenks, executive director. "Her mark was her caring personality. She challenged people to grow in their individual lives. She created a space here for transgenders and facilitated the support group. She'd talk about her 'girls' and how we needed to provide for them.

"She was a larger-than-life presence in the drop-in center, especially during the evening shift. And she started the outings. The folks here were her family."

Ms. Washington felt that people needed to get out of the neighborhood to see how they could enjoy themselves elsewhere. She organized picnics, trips to the zoo and parks, even a trip to the see the Blue Angels, Jenks recalled.

But Ms. Washington wasn't always so confident.

The Rev. Glenda Hope, who conducted the memorial, said she first met her 15 years ago at Network Ministries, which Hope founded, when Ms. Washington came looking for human contact. A reason Ms. Washington had secluded herself then was because she was so ashamed of her bad teeth, Hope said.

As motivation for getting her teeth fixed, Ms. Washington said she needed someone else to care. She asked Hope: "Will you be my friend?" Hope said yes. And the next time the two met on the street, Ms. Washington flashed the beaming smile of gleaming teeth that would later add to her popularity.

"She had incredible courage and will to transform her depressed and isolated state to become the Ms. Washington we all know and love," Hope said. "She gave away so much love to so many."

Several mourners recalled her personal advice to them and how they had cherished her counsel. One man said she was a shining example of the self-help that the center holds dear. "I loved the woman," he said.

Four people sang songs to her in tribute. "She never looked down on anybody," said a woman named Karen. "I saw her give away her lunch to someone who was hungry. She had a lot of capacity, something that's lacking in the world."

—TOM CARTER

**BRIAN BECKERLEG**  
Lovable in spite of himself

Brian Beckerleg could make you smile or set your teeth on edge. When he felt good, he was talkative, and when he didn't feel so hot, he ragged on people, popped off or fell silent. But his shortcomings didn't stop eight mourners on May 15 from giving the formerly homeless man a heartfelt send-off.

"He wasn't one of my best friends," said a man named Carl in the West Hotel's mezzanine library where the memorial was held. "But he wasn't a bad person. I don't hold anything against him. And I hope he wasn't in too much pain when he died."

One woman recalled with a smile that the scraggly-bearded Mr. Beckerleg — usually unkempt and wanting to roam the neighborhood for a cup of coffee — was "a character."

In the lobby, or in the basement community room where he loved to watch television, Mr. Beckerleg often bummed cigarettes and yammered away to anyone who would listen, or just clammed up. He claimed he came from a wealthy family and bragged that he used to be a "ladies man." And although Mr. Beckerleg had a home and a community at the West, he was unable to make any close friends, people said.

Mr. Beckerleg died May 7 in his room after a long battle with kidney disease and other medical problems. He was 57. On a table were a vase of flowers,

two lighted candles and the hotel's Polaroid ID picture of Mr. Beckerleg. Cookies and drinks were on another table.

"He was a good guy but he had problems," said a neighbor of Mr. Beckerleg's. "I think he was dealt a hard hand."

Mr. Beckerleg was homeless and in poor health when he moved into the West Hotel, handsomely renovated by TNDC 2½ years ago. Twice a week a van took him to the hospital for three-hour kidney dialysis treatments, which he hated. He was hospitalized once for six months. Recently, he had missed some appointments, hotel manager Charisa Jones said.

"But he was a fighter," said TNDC's Tomiquia Moss who knew him for two years. "And when he was up, he was positive. People looked after him, showed their concern. But he was infamous at the West — one of those guys you hated to love, I guess. I'll miss him."

The Rev. Glenda Hope, who conducted the memorial, took heart at the participation.

"Often I'll hear comments at a memorial and wonder is this the same person I know?" she said. "I like it when people are honest. We are all just human, and it's okay to be human. Thank you for your realness. It's healing for us all to be here."

—TOM CARTER

**MICHAEL REMEDES**  
Disc jockey

Michael Remedés, a San Francisco rock-n-roller who became a Los Angeles DJ, returned in 1999, took up residence in the Hamlin Hotel and began writing his memoirs. But he didn't complete them.

Three months ago, Mr. Remedés went to pay his rent and the breathing condition he had been battling became so debilitating that hotel services representatives say they told him to go to the hospital. An ambulance took him to St. Francis. He never returned.

"He said his problem was so bad that the doctors couldn't analyze it," said Kathleen Flanagan, a service representative, at his May 10 memorial service. She called him several times in the hospital. "He hoped to get better and return. He considered this home."

Mr. Remedés died of undisclosed causes at the hospital on April 25. He was 59.

On a table with two candles and a black and white 5 by 7 picture of Mr. Remedés, his daughter had written a brief obituary that was on a small stand. Her father was born in San Diego and had two brothers and a sister. He came to San Francisco in the 1960s and joined a band called One Gone Later.

No one at the memorial had heard of the band. And nobody knew what instrument he played, if he did. His daughter wasn't there, either.

Mr. Remedés went to Los Angeles in the 1970s and became a disc jockey and apparently retired after 25 years.

"He left the radio world and returned," the daughter wrote. "In Francisco, he felt very connected because it provides the type of energy he thrived on and gives to everyone what he believed in — the sentiment to be free to be who you are."

Several mourners admitted they didn't know Mr. Remedés, who was nice enough, they said, but kept to himself and had no close friends. They speculated about what interesting stories were in his memoirs of the 1960s. His daughter, who they said was beautiful, came to the hotel to gather his belongings and the "cartons and cartons" of Mr. Remedés' record albums and tapes.

"She said she was going to read the book and conclude it if she could," said Flanagan.

—TOM CARTER

**DUANE RUSSELL**  
Athletic and outgoing

In the sunny, high-ceilinged community room at 1180 Howard St., friends and family gathered May 16 to say good-bye to Duane Russell.

"The day he moved in here, the whole floor lit up," said Samson Whitaker, Mr. Russell's neighbor for a little more than a year at the modern 142-unit apartment building developed by TNDC and Citizens Housing Corp. "I saw him just a week before he died — he was smiling. Just knowing him gave me strength."

One of Mr. Russell's great joys was his dog, Chica, a 6-year-old Shar-Pei and black Lab mix.

"I watched Duane with Chica, and you could tell he was a good man and that his dog was his best friend," said resident David Carpenter.

They were so inseparable that when Mr. Russell died in his studio apartment on April 24, Chica made it hard for officials to enter the room, explained Tony Robbins, a close friend of Mr. Russell's for five years.

Another neighbor, Lori Gonzales, said Mr. Russell was one of the first people she met when she moved



into the apartment building. "He was always with Chica, and he was always full of fun, though he was shy at first. And because he wasn't a person to ask for anything, I didn't even know he was sick until a month ago."

Mr. Russell's older brother, De'Andre, and

his wife, Rosalyn, traveled from Covina to attend the memorial. His cousin Monica also attended.

"Can you tell us anything about Duane's final days?" Whitaker asked the family. "It's hard when we don't know."

"He had the sickness for 20 years and that's what got him," De'Andre Russell said. "But more than that, I think he just gave up. It was a blessing he lived as long as he did. We think he died knowing he was loved by us, even though he chose to stay away from the family."

Mr. Russell was 43.

A native of Los Angeles, he attended L.A. Trade Tech College and majored in business administration. He was head manager at a Blockbuster store and later, after moving to San Francisco, worked in a brokerage firm. Athletic and outgoing, his community activities included assisting Peter Ueberroth, former Major League Baseball commissioner and current head of the U.S. Olympic Committee, in the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles.

After the memorial service, several people asked Robbins if someone had taken in Chica. Yes, he assured them — he'd helped find her a good home.

—MARJORIE BEGGS

**DOROTHY SUE BUHL**  
A smile on her face

In her 10 to 15 years in San Francisco, Dorothy Sue Buhl had one permanent home — the William Penn Residence — and she lived there only three months, dying in her room May 16. She was 40.

"I met her just two days before she died," said Stephanie Cobb, Chinatown Community Services' new tenant services representative for the William Penn. "She was homeless for so long, but she had a smile on her face when I met her. She wanted to start doing some work with us, but God had other plans for her."

Several hotel staff and five residents attended the May 31 memorial for Ms. Buhl, held in the community room. Pale yellow and black linoleum set off warm yellow walls where four handsome, framed botanical prints hung. At the front of the room was a large photo of Ms. Buhl, smiling, flanked by two candles and a colorful bouquet.

Before the memorial, Cobb told The Extra that Ms. Buhl was found in her room by another resident, a man she'd been working for as an informal "home provider," helping him with shopping and other chores. Cobb said she did not know the cause of death.



Ms. Buhl was born in Fresno, had a sister who still lives there and four teenage daughters living near Los Angeles. "From the little I know, Dorothy and the children were homeless for a long time," Cobb said.

The hotel's property manager, who gave her name only as Fawzia, also had met Ms. Buhl shortly before her death. "I could tell she was happy — she told me this was the first time she'd ever had her own place."

Shortly after Ms. Buhl moved into the William Penn, a neighbor across the hall said she heard her thanking God aloud for the roof over her head.

But her life had been hard, said Russell Lancaster. "I was her boyfriend for four years, though I lived in a different hotel," he said. "She had a rough time, but she never said anything bad about anyone. She was homeless until I talked her into getting off the street."

Asked about Ms. Buhl's daughters, Lancaster said their father "took them to the reservation," but had no other details.

"Looking at this picture of Dorothy, you can see suffering in her face," said the Rev. Glenda Hope, who officiated at the memorial, "but you can also see that forward-looking smile."

—MARJORIE BEGGS

# The Fools faithfully display outlaw art

*Copy shop exhibits S.F. State students' artistic reactions to censorship*

BY ED BOWERS

**C**ENSORSHIP is lethal to human evolution. It hides behind good intentions, but the result is always to kill facts, suppress information, and control people into being other than themselves. Its purpose is to obfuscate awareness so that we live in the Land of the Blind controlled by those who themselves cannot see.

At San Francisco State, art student Fiamma C. Giger presented a work of art called "Camouflage," on lined, recycled paper from her notebooks that were communications between herself and a friend who joined the R.O.T.C. program for financial benefits.

The work is a portrait of her dressed in an R.O.T.C. uniform blown up to life-size proportions and showing her surrounded by words from her communications to her friend, some of which had verbs and nouns considered by many people to be "inappropriate."

This work was entered at an art show at the state Capitol in Sacramento, where it was deemed inappropriate for display because of the language of the text surrounding her image. So it was then placed in a private office at the Capitol, with the door closed and the stipulation that if someone requested to see it, they could.

In other words, Giger was treated with the same respect as a pornographer in the Fifties selling shots of topless burlesque queens to high school students on a street corner in a small town.

Richard Kamler, her art instructor, backed her up by gathering together 18 other student artists to collaborate on creating a number of works of art based on the theme "Artists As Citizens Respond To Censorship."

This exhibit was recently on display at the Faithful Fools at 234 Hyde St., and it's one of the best exhibitions of art I have seen of late.

Most art sickens me. I don't even know anymore why I'm doing an art column. But the pieces on display in the copy shop of the Faithful Fools have integrity, humor and guts. That's rare in the art world, which by now is mostly about interior decorating, wine and cheese.

One piece shows a fat Uncle Sam, pockets full of dollar bills, turds coming out of him, urine as well.

Another depicts the skyscrapers of the Financial District covered with money — not exactly subtle, but enthusiastically executed.

Giger's piece was ostensibly censored for certain forbidden words, but was actually 86'd from the Capitol art competition for being anti-war.

That's my opinion of course. I have no way to prove it. But I wasn't born yesterday. If obscene words were forbidden at the state Capitol, every employee there would now be behind bars.

There was a piece at the Fools' exhibit about self-censorship: the sculpture of a black man smiling and pretending to be happy to entertain his oppressors. That's not just a black thing anymore; it is pretty much across the board, especially in regards to service personnel in San Francisco.

The fact that this kind of censorship is happening today indicates a metastasizing totalitarian fascism is slowly taking over the country. That this exhibit found a home in the Tenderloin is ironic given the fact that this neighborhood is where people are confined when their politically or culturally incorrect lives and problems have been effectively censored from ordinary human consciousness.

If this neighborhood was a work of art, it would be concealed behind closed doors.

There was a reception for this event at the Faithful Fools. A number of people were there, warriors against totalitarianism. A lot of words were said; I hope they have some effect in the future.

But the real heroes of this event were Fiamma C. Giger, and her instructor, Richard Kamler, who backed her up when she needed support. Giger is a sincere and extremely talented young woman. She was rather self-effacing at the reception, as opposed to many artists in San Francisco who talk a lot about themselves and do very little.

The state Capitol in Sacramento is not in favor of freedom of speech. That's obvious. They are afraid



**This work, "Camouflage" by Fiamma C. Giger, was deemed inappropriate for display in an art show at the state Capitol. The offending words are not legible here. But it and 18 other works by artists at S.F. State, created in reaction to the censorship of "Camouflage," were exhibited at the Faithful Fools copy shop.**

of a picture of a young woman in an R.O.T.C. uniform surrounded by words.

I dare them to live in my neighborhood for more than a week. Maybe then they'd have something real to fear.

Honors should go to the Faithful Fools for facil-

itating this dangerous exhibit which was on display through May 18.

I hope you checked it out. Maybe you were offended, or amused, or learned something new.

I hope so. That's what great art is for.

At any rate, I know you weren't bored. ■

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# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## 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 James Chionsini, 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

**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 ext. 202 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. 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: 538-8100 x202

**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. 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

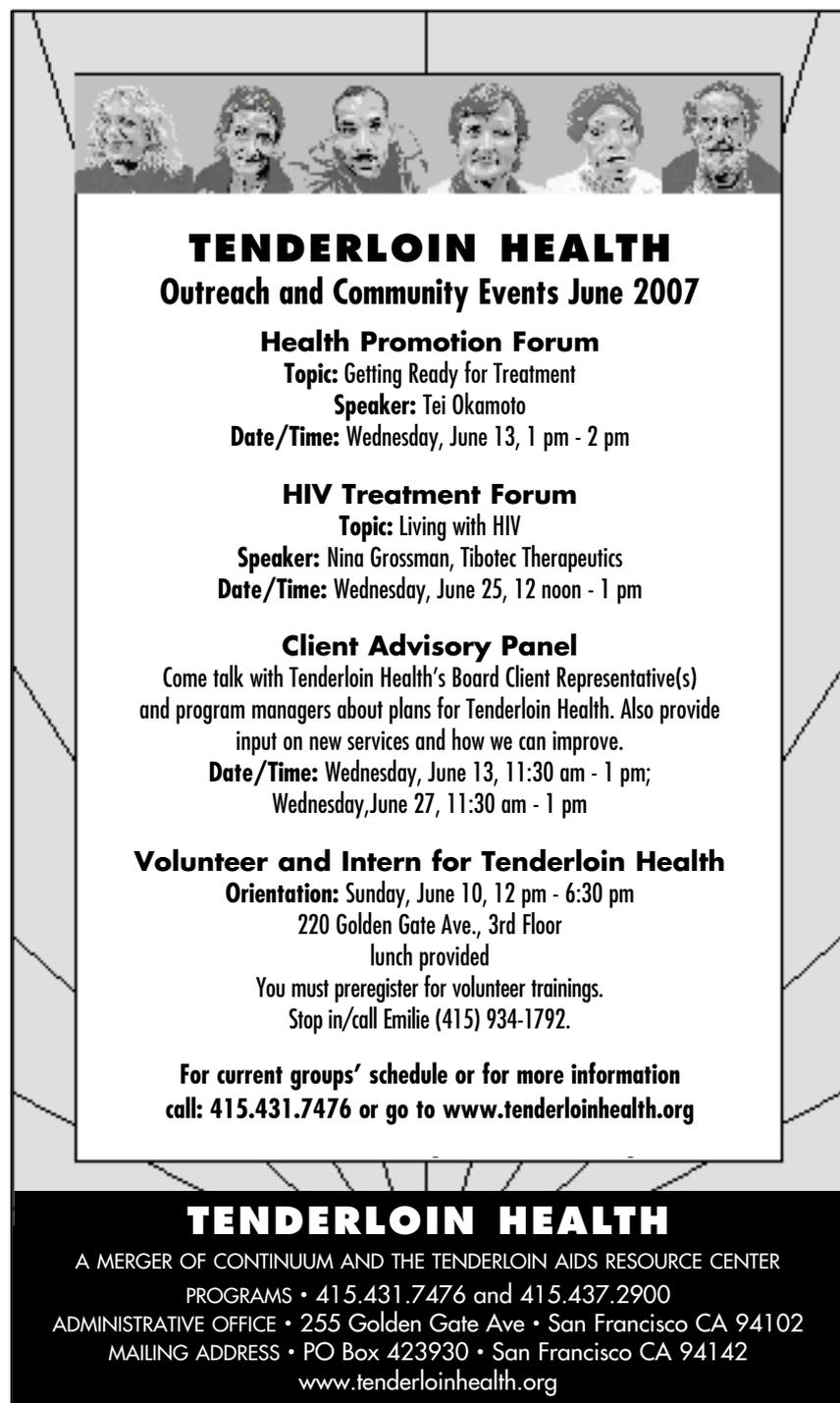
**Mayor's Disability Council**, 3rd Friday of the month, 1-3 p.m., City Hall, Rm. 400. Call: 554-6789. Open to the public.

**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, Duffy, Ammiano, Mirkarimi, Elsbernd, Wednesday, 1 p.m.

**Land Use Committee** Maxwell, Sandoval, McGoldrick, Monday, 1 p.m.



**TENDERLOIN HEALTH**  
Outreach and Community Events June 2007

**Health Promotion Forum**  
Topic: Getting Ready for Treatment  
Speaker: Tei Okamoto  
Date/Time: Wednesday, June 13, 1 pm - 2 pm

**HIV Treatment Forum**  
Topic: Living with HIV  
Speaker: Nina Grossman, Tibotec Therapeutics  
Date/Time: Wednesday, June 25, 12 noon - 1 pm

**Client Advisory Panel**  
Come talk with Tenderloin Health's Board Client Representative(s) and program managers about plans for Tenderloin Health. Also provide input on new services and how we can improve.  
Date/Time: Wednesday, June 13, 11:30 am - 1 pm;  
Wednesday, June 27, 11:30 am - 1 pm

**Volunteer and Intern for Tenderloin Health**  
Orientation: Sunday, June 10, 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](http://www.tenderloinhealth.org)

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