

# Support grows for safe site to inject drugs

Backers include D.A. Gascon, former TL police captain, health care alliance

BY TOM CARTER

**I**F the city creates safe injection sites, most health experts agree, it could save lives from overdosing and reduce the risk of HIV and hep C infections, two diseases that kill numbers of San Franciscans every year.

A room where addicts can inject their dope without fear of arrest and under medical supervision, using clean needles and maintaining hygiene is supported by District Attorney George Gascon, former Tenderloin police Capt. Gary Jimenez, and a coalition of major groups. The Department of Public Health has been supportive in the past, but isn't interested now because it can't fund current services let alone a new endeavor.

This compassionate, lifesaving concept, which offends some people

but excites many health and law enforcement professionals, is being shopped around City Hall. Staff of the Alliance to Save Lives — representatives from the many groups in support — say they have talked to four supervisors since January about the controversial service that no U.S. city has yet to adopt.

"We haven't found any opposition," says Laura Thomas, deputy state director of the Drug Policy Alliance, who heads the group. "And last year when George Gascon was police chief, he came out for it at a Young Democrats meeting." The Drug Alliance, with offices in five states, says it is the nation's leading organization offering alternatives to the drug war.

"Drug use is a public health problem and safe, clean sites for injection are preferable to unsafe

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

**"A lot of people don't understand that we can't solve this problem through law enforcement."**

Capt. Gary Jimenez

NO. 115

PUBLISHED BY THE SAN FRANCISCO STUDY CENTER

SEPTEMBER 2011

## 7& RESIDENTS REACT TO IV SITES

Some for, some agin, a good discussion

PAGE 3

## A NEW TENDERLOIN STAR

Poetess works the Arts Market

PAGE 4



## OBITUARIES: DARWIN DIAS

Activist who fought for rights of peers

PAGE 6

# CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

## FRINGE 20 FESTIVAL



PHOTO BY MOLLY PECK

From New York, Tanya O'Debra's "Radio Star," a 1940s-style radio detective spoof, "only dirtier," has her voicing 10 different characters plus sound effects.

# The New York City 7

Big Apple groups see EXIT Theatre's fete as major gig on Fringe circuit

BY MARK HEDIN

**J**UST Like New York City's legendarily seedy Times Square, San Francisco's Eddy Street has its share of hustlers, hookers and have-nots. But this month, Eddy is our Great White Way for some of the Big Apple's most ambitious showbiz types. Seven stage productions from that city populate the schedule of 44 shows coming to six Tenderloin venues in the 20th San Francisco Fringe Festival.

Fringe festivals are staged worldwide, from Edinburgh, Scotland, where they started, to South Africa, in Europe and all across Canada and the United States, offering cutting-edge theater at affordable prices. The most expensive shows at this milestone year's S.F. Fringe cost \$10; several are free. The performers keep the gate.

The festivals attract itinerant showmen, young, aspiring dramaturges and everything in between. The productions are chosen by a nonjuried — indeed, random — selection process, in San Francisco's case this year, from a Tupperware container with slips of paper bearing each of more than 130 applicants' names. The resultant lineup includes something for everybody.

Of the seven shows coming from New

York, however, not one is deemed appropriate for preteens. Other shows draw the line at ages 7, 8, 10, 11½, 12, 14, 15 and 16 or simply say "not for children."

There are other guidelines for viewer interest and some shows will satisfy several categories at once. New Yorker Una Aya Osato, for instance, is bringing her solo performance, "JapJAP," which the program says involves "tearing down borders and tearing off clothes."

"JapJAP" won Best of Festival at the Winnipeg Fringe earlier this year, and was a newspaper's top pick at the Montreal Fringe. It got the Audience Choice Award at New York's version of the Fringe Festival, dubbed Frigid.

"Hopefully, the audiences will come out and take a chance on something that isn't on Broadway, but us coming together and sharing our stories," Osato said by phone from New York. "It's an awesome festival, continually some of the best theater I've seen."

She and other Fringe veterans cite the camaraderie between the artists and producers and the networking opportunities the festivals provide. Osato, who's been performing since she was 2 and doing solo shows for seven years — at venues off Broadway, off-off Broadway, at schools, universities and "anywhere people gather" — said she is inspired by seeing what others are up to at the Fringe.

In San Francisco in particular, she said, the diversity of experiences the audiences bring to the theater, plus the sheer joy of being in San Francisco and the hospitality of EXIT Theatre, all make this a choice gig.

"It's exciting to do theater outside of New York, because New York is so saturat-

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



PHOTO INSITE, VANCOUVER B.C.

A user in Vancouver, B.C.'s medically supervised injection site prepares to shoot up with a free rig.