

# Twitter gives the hood 2,000 PB&J sandwiches

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on specifics, but here are highlights from Twitter's seven-page final.

It begins with its "Days for Good" — "Twitter held one in June and planning another in November," the document says. More than 400 volunteers visited more than 25 unnamed organizations to donate 200 disaster kits and 2,000 PB&J sandwiches, paint a mural and help build two community gardens. Twitter employees, as at all the tax-break firms, were paid for their volunteer time for CBA work at their regular pay. The city administrator rated the work "completed."

The second item in the report lists 20 organizations Twitter selected for volunteer days, and 18 others as "workshop attendees" for activities it held in and around its Market Street office "to educate and engage its employees in the community." "As always," the report says, "we had at least one group of employees decide they will be going back regularly to the place they volunteered." "Progress: Completed," the segment concludes.

Though the Twitter for Good blog,

"our portal for community event news and highlights," the report claims, had only six posts between its June 2012 launch and mid-February 2014, this segment, too, concludes: "Progress: Completed."

Point 5 is technical assistance in social media Twitter provided to nonprofits. It says 47 volunteers worked with 30 organizations but lists 28. "Many" groups, it continues, did well enough to "become eligible for an Ads for Good grant of \$5,000 in free Twitter advertising."

In testimony at earlier CAC meetings and in conversations with The Extra, some of these same nonprofits have said they welcome Twitter's help with fundraising capability, but lacked the technology for Twitter's strategies to be of any practical use. "Progress: Completed," the document says.

Under Point 6, Twitter promised \$60,000 of credit for "Promoted Tweets" to nonprofits but admits it gave only \$55,000, thereby earning the first of two "Progress: Not Complete" findings among the document's 25 points.

Point 7 is a pledge to participate in the TechSF initiative by attending at least

one TechSF event and "maintaining contact with the Mayor's Office of Innovation." That would be: "Hosting event at Twitter HQ." "Progress: Completed."

Point 8 is a pledge to "participate in at least two events per year targeted at economically disadvantaged individuals to share tips on how to gain employment with the company and similar firms." In bold-face type, the document says, "Have been to over two local events ... including a TechSF event" — perhaps that mentioned in point 7? Score another "Progress: Completed."

Point 9 is Twitter's promise to award grants totaling at least \$60,000 and says it exceeded its goal by giving \$75,000 to seven neighborhood nonprofits: "Cuttingball Theatre, Tenderloin Community School, Vietnamese Youth Development Center, Intersection for the Arts, Hospitality House CAP, Larkin Street and Heart of the City Farmer's Market."

In item 10, Twitter describes its volunteerism at local schools and reports sending tutors to the Tenderloin Tech Lab, Bessie Carmichael and through the Reading Partners program that visits

schools citywide. Megan Trotter of the Tenderloin Tech Lab and Assistant Principal Karen Francois of Bessie Carmichael confirmed Twitter's contributions.

Without going point by point through Twitter's remaining 15 items, here's a summary of the claims: 40 computers donated to Tenderloin Scholarship Fund, Oasis for Girls and Mercy Housing; 400 staffers volunteered, including 25 who helped build two community gardens, one being the planter boxes outside DISH's Le Nain Hotel at 730 Eddy St.; street sweeping; tutors at Bessie Carmichael and Tenderloin Tech Lab; providing lawyers, paralegals or legal administrative professionals to the Homeless Advocacy Project (10 hours), Housing Negotiation Project (14.5 hours) and Project Homeless Connect (8.75 hours) and other unnamed housing rights organizations for a total of 130 hours; four employees joined nonprofits' boards of directors. Twitter also met with the Bicycle Coalition, hosted a film and posted notices about "Jersey Boys" and Sunday Streets. ■

## Simple way tech firms could help Tenderloin

Given the details of the lives of seniors and the disabled, what simple thing could tech companies do in the neighborhood that would be relevant to the needs? The lifestyles of the Tenderloin aged suggest that sequestering themselves and loneliness is self-debilitating.

Would volunteering an hour twice a month to talk to an isolated senior be of value? Rev. Glenda Hope, who spent a 40-year career listening to people in the Tenderloin, was asked to comment.

"I think it would be good anytime to do something like that," she said, but immediately added that volunteers need some attitude grooming beforehand.

"There's an age divide and the cultural divide can be huge," she said. "A person needs some training, orientation and sensitivity. And I'd go at them pretty hard to unearth their attitudes.

I'd try to get them to see the way they look at old, poor people. And then it needs follow-up. Give them time to think about it."

"They need to look deeply and think things through," Hope said. "Breakthroughs come when you see your own brokenness."

Hope, with her Network Ministries nonprofit, started TenderloinElderFriends in 1981 after witnessing the death of a friend who jumped from an SRO building to her death because of her suffering and loneliness. The group's members visited the frail and elderly. After 17 years, Hope turned it over to Little Brothers, Friends of the Elderly.

"People need the orientation. They can share and teach each other." ■  
— Tom Carter

## Golden years in SROs

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His room is larger than his wife's and, unlike hers, has a small kitchen.

Mi receives \$900 monthly in Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and pays under a third of it for rent. The other expenses — groceries, medicine, dental, vision care — can add up quickly, putting financial pressure on her, she says.

"I try not see a dentist or an ophthalmologist as long as I possibly can," she said. "Last time when I really needed to see a dentist, I paid \$80 for a checkup and \$30 for extracting a tooth."

Mi says she could save money by cooking and eating in more, but without her own kitchen that's not easy. With a microwave and a rice cooker, she makes simple dishes like soup or steamed vegetables. She says she misses home-cooked dishes from her country, but only gets the chance to do that when she uses her husband's kitchen. Time is the other limiting factor.

Nowadays, Mi's schedule is dictated by her husband's. She cares for him round-the-clock, save for a break between 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., when he goes to an adult day health center. She often stays with him until midnight, and dreads the short walk home.

"I am worried that I would be attacked by a homeless people at night

and even in the day time," she said. "I prefer not to go out after 8 p.m."

When her husband is at the adult day health center, Mi relaxes at a morning "coffee hour" twice a week in the hotel lobby. Most of the residents are Chinese immigrants, drawn to the SRO's bilingual services. At the coffee hour, seniors — men and women — huddle in small groups, chatting, drinking coffee and eating pastries.

Mentally and physically exhausted for years, Mi welcomes the morning social hour, even though she doesn't really talk to anyone. She stands to the side and just watches the other seniors socialize.

The majority of the residents speak only Cantonese. For Mi, a Mandarin speaker, it's hard to connect with them, she says.

Mi's main concern now is caring for her husband. Her daughter helps out, occasionally taking care of her father after work and on weekends. But, the responsibility falls mainly on Mi.

"I really don't know how much longer I can continue taking care of my husband," she said. "Once my life ends, who could give him good care if he is still alive at that time?" ■

*Summer Chiang is a New America Media reporter and Chinese media monitor.*



PHOTO BY HEIDI SWILLINGER

**Rev. Glenda Hope** pioneered memorials in SROs three decades ago as a way to build community and dignify each person's life.



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