

GOOD NEWS for...

TAX FILERS In the three central city ZIP codes — 94102, 94103 and 94109 — more than 4,000 people are eligible for the government's economic stimulus payment because they collect Social Security or veterans' benefits. It could mean as much as \$300 in their pockets, but first they have to file an ESP tax return. Free help filing is available at the IRS' walk-in Taxpayer Assistance Center at 450 Golden Gate. For more information: United Way's Earn It!Keep It!Save It! Program: Go to uwba.org and click on program info at bottom of page.

FILIPINAS GRAPPLING with breast cancer can join a new SoMa support group that meets every other Monday. Conducted in Tagalog, the group is offered by the Filipino Senior Resource Center, which won a grant from the Avon Foundation to address the rising rate of breast cancer among Asian American women. First meeting was in July. The group offers education, social and emotional support, and arts and crafts. Meetings are at the center, 953 Mission St., Suite 61. Next meeting: Aug. 18 at 1:30 p.m. Call 278-0484.

THE 'HOOD A University of Illinois study found: "The greener a building's surroundings were, the fewer crimes reported." So grab your gloves and join co-sponsors North of Market/Tenderloin Community Benefit District, The New Tenderloin and Friends of the Urban Forest for another neighborhood tree planting, Sat., Aug. 9, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Meet at 8 a.m. at 118 Jones for coffee and muffins, move to 40 Jones for a tree-planting demonstration, then spread out in teams to plant 25 trees throughout the Tenderloin. Most will replace damaged or dying trees. But some are new, like those that will be planted in front of the Book Concern Building at 83 McAllister. Volunteers also are needed to unload trees Aug. 8 at 7 a.m. Information: Elaine Zamora, 440-7570 x 21 or ezamora@sbcglobal.net.

BIZ FAVES Nominations are open for Urban Solutions' fourth annual San Francisco Neighborhood Business Award. Before Aug. 15, submit the name of any unsung small retail business you think contributes mightily to your community. New this year is a special "green" category. A first-tier panel of judges — small-business owners, city leaders, residents, Urban Solutions staff and clients — reviews the 200 or so nominations and pares them down to less than 20. Urban Solutions staff check out these finalists and write up their observations for the final judges panel, which picks three winners plus honorable mentions. The awards party, tix going for \$50, will be Oct. 7 at Mezzanine nightclub, 444 Jessie off Mint Plaza. To nominate your favorite entrepreneur: urbansolutionsSF.org/nominate.

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

Safe place to shoot dope — some say it will save lives

Mayor loses interest in hot-button topic

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

SETH Katzman stood confidently to make his presentation at the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative July meeting, but quickly acknowledged his topic wasn't popular with neighborhood activists — or Mayor Newsom.

"Last October, the mayor said he'd be open to considering safe-injection sites," said Katzman, rep of Alliance for Saving Lives and Conard House director of supportive housing and community services. "Now he's not because he's running for governor."

Katzman came hoping to find even a glimmer of support for the controversial idea of establishing medically supervised locations — perhaps in Public Health clinics — where IV users bring their own drugs, inject themselves in the privacy of clean carrels, and exchange and dispose of needles safely. Such sites operate in Vancouver, B.C., and 27 European cities.

In October, TL Capt. Gary Jimenez met a wall of resistance at a Friends of Boeddeker Park meeting when he proposed a temporary, screened-off injection site at the back of the park. Hearing all the opposition, he conceded, "Maybe it's a stupid idea." More recently, the captain said he still wants to keep it on the table.

Katzman insists the sites work: "They get users off the streets, there are fewer needles on the street and fewer pass-outs. They help prevent diseases, and social work staff can offer not just recovery programs but other help, too."

"Why can't funds be used instead for rehab, rather than to worsen addiction?" asked Ed Evans.

Funds for rehab are "already there," Katzman said, "but many people don't avail themselves of that (option)."

He couldn't estimate the cost of a safe-injection site, but hospitalization and emergency services for users cost the city so much, he said the site would save "tons of money."

"Where would it be located?" asked David Villa-Lobos, Community Leadership Alliance director.

Best would be where most injection users are, Katzman answered — the Tenderloin and the Mission.

Not what Collaborative members wanted to hear.

"Your proposal would just dump more addicts here," said one man. "It's so disrespectful of the people in this neighborhood."

"Providing a safe haven like this, aren't we just asking for World War III?" wondered Hastings CFO David Seward.

Katzman countered that the war is already happening. "We've got the problem right now. Why not give (addicts) the opportunity to use more safely?"

Alliance for a Better District 6 President Michael Nulty commented dryly that people don't use the neighborhood's public bathrooms — installed to reduce another unwanted behavior. "Why would they use this site?" he asked.

Collaborative Chair Glenda Hope called time on the topic.

The Extra contacted the mayor's office about his waffle on the proposed sites, and got back this email from Joe Arellano, deputy communications director:

"Until we have offered every IV drug user treatment, we are not considering movement in the direction of safe-injection sites."

MARIAN RESIDENCE BECOMES MEDICAL RESPITE

Father John Hardin put a positive spin on the news that St. Anthony Foundation is shuttering the Marian Residence for homeless women and 10 other programs. For a dozen years, the Marian has readied its clients to move into more permanent housing by providing 27 transitional beds and 30 emergency shelter beds.

"We had to make cuts in many programs because about 40% of our operating budget is bequests, and that money just isn't coming in anymore," Hardin, St. Anthony's executive director, told the Collaborative.

Marian Residence at 1171 Mission St. will close at the end of August.

Its new tenant, Hardin said, is one whose work fits snugly with St. Anthony's mission. The Department of Public Health and the nonprofit CATS (Community Awareness and Treatment Services) will lease the building and provide 80 medical respite beds for women and men.

Betty Traynor, chair of Friends of Boeddeker Park, told Hardin she was disappointed the Marian is closing. "Will you try to continue to help other homeless women, not just those from the Marian?" she asked.

"Closing Marian was one of the most difficult decisions we had to make," Hardin said, "but it cost \$1.3 million to run it — it was the Hilton of shelters."

After the meeting, The Extra got more details from Marc Trotz, DPH director of housing and urban health.

"CATS and St. Anthony's are in lease negotiations right now," Trotz said. CATS, which serves dually diagnosed homeless people, will provide the nonclinical services — food, janitorial and basic client care — while DPH will supply nurses, nurse practitioners, social workers and the respite director.

For 15 years, CATS has leased 39 Fell St., formerly the McMillan Center, a medically supervised sobering center. That lease is up at year's end, and the owner wants CATS out, Trotz said.

The back story: A year ago, McMillan switched from being a sobering center to medical respite for men and women.

"Medical respite means recuperation stays for those who need continuing medical assistance and supervision after they leave the hospital," Trotz said. "The average stay is 34 days, and the service priority is finding them more permanent housing."

DPH also staffs a second medical respite site in a wing of Episcopal Community Services' Next Door homeless shelter at Polk and Geary. Together, 39 Fell and Next Door have 60 medical respite beds, and they have had a good track record, according to Trotz, placing 40% of their discharges in residential settings, including drug treatment, to help keep them from returning to the streets.

Combining the two sites at the three-story Marian Residence will be more cost-efficient for the city, Trotz said. Men will be on the first floor, women on the third, CATS admin on the second, plus 10 beds on the first floor for drop-ins to sober up.

Trotz expects the new facility — as yet unnamed, he said — to open by January. ■



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