

## What comes to mind when you think of street youth?

*Would you be surprised that 80% of our clients are young people of color? That the majority are born in San Francisco? That more than one-third of our clients have been employed during the last year? Street youth in San Francisco are an incredibly diverse population, and it is an exciting challenge to try to reach all of them and serve their wide-ranging needs. In writing this newsletter, there are things we learned about the young people we support that we never knew before. Hopefully you will see a new side to street youth, too.*

## Street Youth through Providers' Eyes

**Get to know ATC's Collaborators:** ATC partners with other community organizations to help our clients build the lives that they want. Understanding these organizations and their employees, and working in collaboration with them, helps us do a better job connecting our clients to needed services.

 <p><b>CYWD</b> – young women working to heal themselves and their communities</p>	 <p><b>Huckleberry House</b> provides 24-hour crisis service and shelter to high-risk youth</p>	 <p><b>Homeless Youth Alliance</b> provides a variety of services to homeless youth in the Haight</p>	 <p><b>St. James Infirmary</b> provides health-related support for sex workers</p>	 <p><b>Community Response Network</b> works with gang-affiliated youth in the Mission</p>
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Ask one of At The Crossroads' collaborators – other non-profit organizations focused on San Francisco Street Youth – what their average client is like, and they might describe what is widely considered the typical San Francisco street youth: a 20-something, white, punk-rock type, most likely male, hanging out in the Haight.

**They find a home where they are, in the street community. For some it's a better home than the one they came from.**

**-- Sarah Thibault**

Yet they'll also describe young women of color from communities plagued by violence who have been taking care of themselves since they were 15 years old; Latinos in their late teens, out of school, hanging out on the streets of the Mission.

And after this thumbnail overview, they would be quick to point out that these sketches don't capture the true essence of experiences and beliefs among street youth across the city. Young people on the streets are not merely a sum of their

hardships and challenges. They are their strengths and weaknesses, whole people with diverse lives.

"Our clients are just as varied as the city is," said Naomi Akers, the Executive Director of St. James Infirmary, which provides healthcare and health education to sex workers and their partners.

What often unites street youth across various backgrounds are the elements in their communities that drove them to take to the streets, including poverty and violence. It is their desire to survive that brings them to the street.

### Community in the streets

Sarah Thibault, an outreach worker for the Homeless Youth Alliance, a program for homeless youth in the Haight, has heard many times how kids new to the streets were picked on for being

different. "For many, the streets is the first time they find a level of acceptance," said Sarah. "They find a home where they are, in the street community. For some it's a better home than the one they came from."

The idea of a street community is an important one to all street youth.

"People who don't know these communities may be surprised to know there is a high level of unity, loyalty and connection of its members," wrote Jorge Vega. Jorge works with youth in need of temporary shelter at Huckleberry House.

Street youths' experience and understanding of their communities can also be shaped by the organizations they choose to join. Women at the Center for Young Women's Development (CYWD) – which offers a place for young women of color to become leaders and organizers in their own communities – are invited to "Community Crawls," where they take a bus through their neighborhoods to learn



# Letter from the Director

**Rob Gitin**

Sometime around March of 1998, outreach at ATC had become pretty frustrating. Taj Mustapha and I had been going out on the streets of Downtown and the Mission for about two months, and were feeling utterly confused about what we were doing. The source of our confusion was a community of black youth on Market Street who we saw on a regular basis during our Tuesday and Thursday Downtown outreach stints.

Downtown, there were two communities of youth that we saw consistently. The first group was easily identifiable as homeless. These kids were gutter-punks, or street punks. They self-identified as homeless, lived on the streets, were dirty, dressed in tattered clothing, and talked comfortably about being homeless. They were largely white. In other words, they looked the part of the stereotype of “homeless youth.” The second group was much less clear. They did not self-identify as homeless, were dressed in clean, moderately priced clothing, lived in hotels or on the couches or floors of friends and extended family members. They were largely black. They were not generally thought of as homeless youth. When we would approach these youth, we were unsure of ourselves, not really knowing if they should be our clients.

After one particularly challenging night that left us feeling very unsure about what our place should be in these kids’ lives, we had a long conversation into the wee hours of the morning. We reflected on one of the primary goals of ATC, which was reaching out to “underserved homeless youth.”

We had frequently used that term, but had never really defined it. By the end of the conversation, we had a clear definition of underserved, and realized that this group of kids was EXACTLY who we should be targeting.

Because they didn’t look the traditional part of homeless youth, they were rarely, if ever, targeted by homeless youth providers. In fact, the only organization targeting them was law enforcement. And because they did not identify as “homeless,” they were unlikely to ever go into a social service setting that was for “homeless youth.” They were on the streets, receiving almost no support, except from their peers, and sometimes extended family members. In other words, they were the essence of “underserved.”

Our learning curve for understanding the needs of this community was steep. It took a few years for ATC to reach the point where we had taken major steps toward true cultural competency around working with these youth. For example, often when we first meet youth from this community, they might take a few of our supplies, but tell us to save most of our supplies for “the homeless kids.” We used to take that to mean that we shouldn’t approach these specific youth anymore, because they were telling us they weren’t homeless. What we have seen happen time and time again is that if these kids are out night after night, they are not out just having fun, and will eventually ask for all of our supplies, even taking us off to the side and “confessing” that they are actually homeless.

While we feel good about our work with this community, there is still much room for improvement. One of our focuses during the past year has been to advocate for the needs of this population, primarily within the San Francisco city government, but also with other coalitions throughout California. There is a huge gap in the social service system for these young people, and we are excited by the challenge of trying to close this gap. Many other organizations and individuals share in this desire, and we are confident that in the coming years, improvements will be made that help create meaningful opportunities for individuals from this community to build the lives they want.

**Rob Gitin**  
**Director, At The Crossroads**

## At The Crossroads

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**Special Projects Director:** Kelly Brandon **Development Associate:** Molly Rhodes  
**Outreach Volunteers:** Becky Johnson, John Sorrenti, Tev Monin, Naomi Irvine, Renée Etcheverry  
**Organizational Volunteers:** Kristina Batiste, Ed Yaffa, Elizabeth Hart, Gabriella Rodezno, Thomas Carlson  
**Advisory Board Members:** Al Camarillo, Marykate Connor, Nadinne Cruz, Taj Mustapha, Steve Williams

# Mission Statement & Core Values

## Mission Statement

At The Crossroads reaches out to homeless youth and young adults at their point of need, and works with them to build healthy and fulfilling lives.

## Core Values

- Prioritizing meeting the needs of our clients first
- Making services as accessible as possible
- Supporting empowerment
- Respecting individuality

## What We Do: The Basics

- ▶ ATC is on the streets four nights a week in two areas of San Francisco; Downtown and the Mission. We hand out basic necessities like food, condoms, socks, tampons, and hygiene items.
- ▶ We build trusting, non-judgmental counseling relationships, help clients identify goals, and support them in achieving these goals.
- ▶ We meet with some clients 1-to-1, in a public space of their choosing. We listen to them and provide tailored referrals to other services.
- ▶ We do not stop working with our clients if and when they leave the streets. We continue to support them through this transition, for as long as they want.
- ▶ We work closely with other organizations, connecting our clients with services such as jobs, housing, education, health care, and mental health services.
- ▶ We support other programs in their efforts to work with homeless youth through dialogue, trainings, and helpful documents.
- ▶ We advocate for the improvement of the continuum of support for all homeless youth.

## Get Involved with At The Crossroads



### Make a donation to ATC.

You'll experience a sense of happiness and fulfillment that you've never known. You'll want to do it again and again. In all seriousness, the future of At The Crossroads depends on the generosity of individuals who believe in our work. **Checks should be made payable to: "At The Crossroads, a project of CIF"** Or make a credit card donation at [www.atthecrossroads.org](http://www.atthecrossroads.org).

### Volunteer individually.

Do you have some free time in the afternoon or evening? We'd love you to come by our office and sort donated clothing, put away food, drive to the Food Bank and go shopping, or a number of other tasks that keep us going. If you are interested in this, email [getinvolved@atthecrossroads.org](mailto:getinvolved@atthecrossroads.org).

### Volunteer on Street Outreach.

Volunteers accompany Counselors on the street – carrying supplies like drinks and socks. Find out about the process on our website. Email **Kelly** at [kellyb@atthecrossroads.org](mailto:kellyb@atthecrossroads.org).

### Join our volunteer email list.

Receive emails about our monthly supply prep nights, as well as other volunteer opportunities. Help us prepare supplies for outreach to our clients by making candy packs, bunching socks, and bagging soaps and Q-tips. Prep Nights are scheduled on every last Wednesday of the month. If you would like to join our volunteer email list, email **Rob** at [rob@atthecrossroads.org](mailto:rob@atthecrossroads.org).

### Expand our network.

Please let others who might be interested in ATC know about our work! If you'd like, we'll provide you with a packet of information – or you can pass on our newsletter and/or direct people to our website: [www.atthecrossroads.org](http://www.atthecrossroads.org).

### Be creative.

We're open to hearing your ideas for supporting ATC. If you have any questions, feel free to contact us through email ([getinvolved@atthecrossroads.org](mailto:getinvolved@atthecrossroads.org)) or phone (**415-487-0691**). Find our Wish List on our website: [www.atthecrossroads.org](http://www.atthecrossroads.org).

# A Night Of Outreach

Four nights a week, ATC Outreach Counselors go out to meet our clients where they are – on the streets. Here are Counselors' reflections on what one such night was like.

## **Downtown**

The majority of downtown clients – usually we see around 50 a night, mostly young black males and a few females – are cautious of people trying to get in their lives. So oftentimes relationships start with light-hearted conversation about music or sports or current styles. Our clients appreciate that we don't try to get them to bear their soul when we see them, and that we talk about whatever they want.

Like tonight, we saw James. When we first met James, we mainly talked to him about political things. Then about six months ago, he started working with a counselor 1-to-1, and one of his primary subjects was God, his relationship to God and why it's important to him. And through talking about God we've gotten into talking about what's gone on with his children, his parents and his friends.

We also saw Tanya. We often talk to her about jobs or housing, or the situation in her family or with her boyfriend – stuff mostly with helping her reach her goal of staying out of jail. Later on we saw Five Top, who got condoms and candy, and talked about how tired he is, how he wants to make his money and get housing and go home.

We continue to have conversations with clients who knew Asa. (*Asa was shot and killed by the police while unarmed in June 2006; see the article on the facing page about the growing presence of violence in our clients' lives.*) It was such a hard thing for his friends and family. Everyone we talk to about Asa saw him as such a good person. They recognized the steps he was trying to take in his life to have a better life for himself, for his children.

When our clients talk about Asa, they often share a roll call of the other friends and family members they've known who were shot and killed while out there. "When I was 13, this person died, and when I was 17, this person died, and when I was 18, this person died, and when I was 19, these four people died..." It's a marked absence that they don't talk about how mortality applies to them.

Learning about our clients realities, piece by piece, is what enables us do our work effectively. When we understand them as individuals, and learn how they view society, and their place in it, we are able to support them in becoming who they want to be. ■

## **Mission**

It's a very unique feeling, being out on the street doing outreach. Some nights there are really cool conversations with kids. Sometimes someone will read us a poem that they wrote. Or a rap or a joke or whatever. There's so many stereotypes about the populations that we work with, people just assume that these folks aren't kind or respectful or anything. The majority out there really appreciate the supplies, and the smiles, and just having

someone they can talk to. Being out there night after night is the only way that we'd be able to do the work that we do.

Fridays are always different in the Mission. One minute we're walking on Mission Street and we're dealing with people who are homeless, people who are doing sex work, people who are using and/or selling drugs, people who are pimps, people who are gang-affiliated. And then up one block and you're on Valencia Street, with people who look like they're from the suburbs, who come to the Mission to party. It's just such a weird contrast. And if we feel that

way as service providers, you can only imagine how the folks that are out there, literally living out there, must feel.

Tonight was a relatively calm night on outreach. We ran into a client who had been working full-time and doing well. He got laid off because his workplace changed its services, and now instead of offering services in Spanish and English they are offering them in Chinese and English. So he may be coming in to meet with us to try to find work.

We saw another client who's been wanting to get on methadone for quite a while, and we've been trying to find him resources that provide free methadone. Hopefully next week he will become eligible to get a free methadone slot, but we don't know for sure.

The violence has really become much more frequent. It has made us appreciate our interactions each day we go out, because we may not ever see some of these people again. When we do have conversations, it just seems so important that everyone has a chance to speak to somebody. Because they spoke to us, they feel good about where they're at, or they're glad that they've seen us, or we got to give them some supplies to take care of themselves for the night.

Our clients are amazing and they're resilient and they're strong and they're all beautiful in their own ways. We feel very privileged to have the opportunity to get to talk to folks and hear their jokes or hear their sorrows, and hear what's going on with them, because so few ever get an opportunity to be heard and for someone to actually care what they have to say. ■



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Continued from the Front Page

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Street youths' experience and understanding of their communities can also be shaped by the organizations they choose to join. Women at the Center for Young Women's Development (CYWD) – which offers a place for young women of color to become leaders and organizers in

**Just because they don't dress like city hall, doesn't mean they don't have the skills.**

— Socorro Gamboa

their own communities – are invited to "Community Crawls," where they take a bus through their neighborhoods to learn about their communities. On a recent trip to the Bayview/ Hunter's Point, women listened to an oral history of the Bayview uprising, when in September 1966, after a white cop shot a black youth in suspicious circumstances, young people took to the streets demanding better treatment from the police. It was an incident that helped define the neighborhood, yet many women on the bus had never heard of it before.

"Women have a lot of a negative ideas about their communities when they first come here," said Krea Gomez, Program Director for CYWD. With political and social education, women "start to see their community in a different light. They see the issues involved, see that it's not their fault."

Street youth also form communities of their own. This is even encouraged at places like St. James, which created a welcoming environment in the waiting room that lead their clients – who also include their staff using the clinic's services – to come together and share ideas.

### Wanting to be valued

The community at St. James speaks to a larger desire among street youth to be treated as responsible community members. However, this desire is rarely realized.

"People who don't know these kids would be surprised to learn how welcoming and willing to talk they are," said Sarah. "They are hungry for people to listen to them, to see them as human beings."

For Socorro Gamboa, Director of the

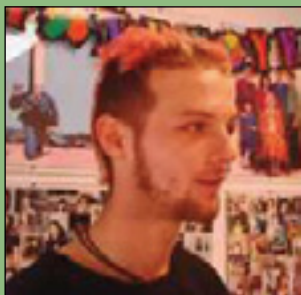
## SF Homeless Outreach Team makes an impact

Over the past few years, many of Gavin Newsom's homelessness initiatives have received a lot of attention. Project Homeless Connect has become adopted by cities across the country. Care Not Cash dominated the news in 2002 and 2003. While these two initiatives have not been very popular with many of our clients, a less-publicized one that has had a major impact on their lives is the revival of the San Francisco Homeless Outreach Team (HOT).

HOT goes onto the streets and tries to reach the most chronically homeless individuals, helping them access services aimed at moving them into permanent housing. One of the remarkable things about HOT is that the outreach workers are sometimes able to get people into a stabilization room the same day that they meet the person. For homeless people who are constantly confronted with years-long waitlists and eligibility restrictions, HOT is a breath of fresh air.

A number of ATC clients have gotten off of the streets with the support of HOT. And once our clients get into a room, they are provided with personalized support that meets people where they are at, and tries to help them create a roadmap for greater health and stability.

The people who work at HOT really give a damn about helping chronically homeless folks improve their lives. Since Newsom has caught a lot of flak from our community for some of his other policies, let's give him props for funding this initiative, and give the city government props for administering it in a way that is easy to access and really reaches some of the people who most need and deserve support. HOT doesn't talk the talk, it walks the walk. ■



**Michael Fisher  
Downtown  
Client**

*Michael spent eight years on the streets and was locked up on September 7, 2002. He wrote his responses in a letter from prison.*

*How do you see the community you are in?*

The streets are my community/family and friends. I love the street life and the people who live it. We are our own community. I could ALWAYS count on the help of a street person. I think we also have a lot less to lie to each other about. The "public" sees us as a nuisance, others envy our lifestyle, others choose not to see us at all. We are not poor; some just have nowhere else to go, some choose the life. Some, like myself, would never have had a life without it.

I'm in prison, so naturally my environment is pretty brutal. In here, it truly is the survival of the fittest. We see no compassion from the civilians who work here.

*How do you think others see your community?*

There are those that sympathize with the conditions that we live in. But there are also those who care nothing for us and believe that we deserve the treatment that we get.

*What's something about you that someone who sees you on the streets would be surprised to know?*

I have a very strong work ethic and when I've had jobs, I was good at them. Also, I'm a good singer (so I've been told). And third, I'm a good cook.

*What's something about you that someone who knows you well would be surprised to know?*

That I totally despised being strung out. It was a weak point in my life that I hope never to repeat. It took too much away from the people I loved and the things I loved to do. It left me empty. A broken shell of what I once was.

*If you could create the best agency/ service to help you, what would it look like?*

If I won the lottery, I'd build apartments for homeless people and charge as little as possible, so kids would have a place to stay. And I'd have a place where they could learn how to get jobs, and I would grease a few palms to make sure people got them. I'll always remember where I came from. ■

# Street Youth: More than What You See

*Please note that some client names in this article have been changed at the request of the client, to protect their privacy.*

**R**evolutionary Entrepreneur. Problematic and passionate. Christian. Freedom fighter. Disappointed and hopeful. Big, beautiful woman.

When asked to describe themselves, ATC's clients saw themselves in a diverse range of identities that often go beyond how they think other people see them.

"I'm not a street punk," said John Conner, a young man who first met ATC counselors downtown. "Most people would judge you the moment they see you. I got tattoos, goatee, things like that. But if they get to know me, they're gonna find out there's more to me than meets the eye."

## Behind the armor

For many clients, they suspect that what people see is what Rashad refers to as the "armor" he wears to make it through his day.

"I guess the way I always got my armor on, I guess people automatically think I'm a hard ass, or that I'm not cool or I can't be talked to," said Rashad. "I want people to know that I am a cool person, that I am approachable."

If more people were able to find ways to get behind the armor, they could discover all kinds of surprising and fascinating things about the young people they see hanging out the streets. That they've held jobs. That they have kids they're dedicated to looking after. That they play musical instruments. That they've traveled across the country.

"I spent a month in Beaver Head National Forest in Montana," said LeJay, "at a Rainbow Gathering with 25,000 hippies."

"I know how to do a lot of things that most people don't know how to do," said Josh, a client we work with downtown. "Anything that has to do with a house, I know how to do."

We both the same. But if I feel like I'm better than you, and you feel like I feel like I'm better than you, then that is a separation.

Conner

"People see me as a chronically homeless skinhead. Or a thug," said Shawn. "But I'm totally not the thug they think I am. I'm a high school graduate. I read all the time. I'm an artist. I'm mechanically inclined. People would be surprised that I'm trying to get my life in order."

## Heading toward something

For Shawn, part of getting his life in order is starting to make plans to return to school, to pursue a degree in nursing. It's a pursuit that he knows might even surprise those who do know him well, who have not been exposed to his compassionate side.

The desire to return to school is a common one among several clients ATC talked to for this article. Josh sees himself learning illustration and silk screening skills, when he's not tearing it up on skateboard ramps. Maria's not sure what exactly she'd study, but she knows, "I want to learn, I want to head towards something."

Others see themselves using their life experiences to benefit others.

"A lot of people make money and leave the community behind, but I wouldn't do that," said John. "I remember when I was a young kid and I didn't have nobody reaching out to me at all, and I got in a lot of trouble. I raised myself, so... if I can do something for somebody and make it a little bit better, and easier, then I will do it. In any way."

And other clients focus on trying to get a handle on the life they have now.

"I want to have my own house," said Star, a Mission client, "and my dog, get proper medical attention, not have to go to free clinics, be able to pay for everything. And I want to be a mom, be a parent to my kids. That's what they deserve, not to pawn them off on somebody else 'cause it's not their responsibility, it's mine."

*continued on Next Page*



A bucket of crabs, it's a bucket of crabs. Everybody pullin' the next person down, don't nobody wanna shine.

--Coley Moley

## Coley Moley, the Foster Kid

### Downtown Client

*How would other people describe you?*

Probably crazy, probably crazy. Or different. I stand out like a sore thumb, that's just how it is.

*Does that differ from how you see yourself?*

I just see myself livin' life and understandin' who I am.

*How do you see the community that you're in?*

A bucket of crabs, it's a bucket of crabs. Everybody pullin' the next person down, don't nobody wanna shine. It ain't no good. Younger and younger people on the streets, they closin' down schools, they buildin' more jails. The cycle keep playing itself.

*What does it take to be family?*

Honesty and trust and loyalty. Know y'all going to have hard times, y'all gonna get mad but you can work it out. Something you trippin' about, I'm not going to be blurtin' out your business. We take that off of the streets.

*If you could be anybody in five years, who would you be?*

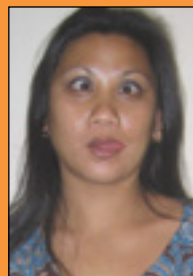
I'd probably be a counselor or a mentor to the youth, 'cause the youth don't know no better. Everybody who get older be like, "If I knew what I knew now, then..."

*Tell me some of the groups you have interactions with.*

I have interactions with everybody. I might talk to the nun, I might talk to the preacher, I might talk to a pimp. It don't matter!

*Tell me what you think about diversity.*

We all together on earth, you feel me? "I got a white shirt on, somebody got a black shirt." It's always separate by something, numbers, whatever. But God died for our sins. All our sins. So He know we gonna be together eventually. You're supposed to try to understand people and see where y'all do meet up, and how can y'all make it better. ■



**Maxine  
Mission Client**

*How would you describe yourself?*

Well, I am Philipino, who's a hard worker, trying to build a family, and trying to get right, and do right.

*How do you see the community that you are in?*

Well, you know, I see street people doing their things. I see the other side of life, which I don't want to be a part of. I see them on the streets, homeless, sleeping on the side of businesses... getting pushed on when they open. I don't like to see those kinds of things.

*What is something about you that someone who just sees you on the street would be surprised to know?*

That I'm actually an easy person to talk to. 'Cause in the streets, you portray yourself differently. When I'm

in the streets I don't smile, I don't talk, I just do what I gotta do, or get to where I got to go to, and you know, get there in a safe way.

*Where do you see yourself in five years?*

In five years, I want to have my own business, maybe in mortgage or loans. Something positive that could benefit my family, and square off all the negative in my past, make it right. Something good.

*If you could create the best agency or service to help you, what would it look like?*

I like working with kids and mothers like myself who don't have it too easy. So I would work in an agency or a community place where I can help out young mothers who are struggling, and help them get support so they can get on their feet.

*How would you be treated at that agency?*

I want to be treated like I'm their equal. I don't want to be like, anybody different. I just want them to feel

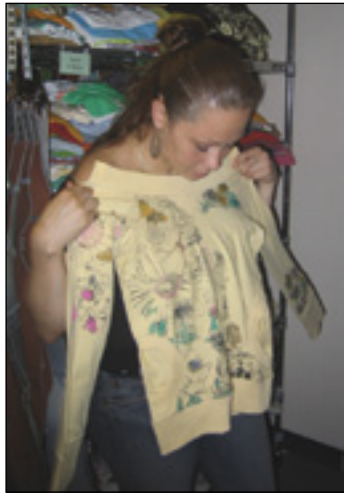
like they can come to me about anything, like I'm just another person to them.

*What are your thoughts on the diversity?*

It's cool. I like diversity. A lot of people, they might look at another and think, oh I'd never be that person's friend, and next thing you know that's the only person that can help you, in a way. That person might be able to save your life. ■

A lot of people might think I'd never be that person's friend, and next thing you know that person might be able to save your life.

--Maxine



**There ain't no unity**

For all the hope and promise they see in themselves, the clients we talked to had a lot more problems and concerns with the communities they lived in, communities that are often united, as Coley Moley put it, by violence and drugs.

“There ain't no unity,” said Coley Moley, a downtown client. “People be fallin' 'cause they're used to falling and getting right back up.

They accustomed to their life, you feel me? They ain't trying to stand, though, and not have to fall no more. The communities moving in here just trying to hurry up and buy. They're trying to move us out of here. They ain't trying to open up no opportunity for us. For the youth.”

“The community is cool,” said Star. “It's the drugs coming in and out that's no good. If there wasn't so much around me I wouldn't be doing it as much. I deserve better than this shit.”

Even clients who have a place to stay find their lives overwhelmed by what they have do to survive there.

“I spend my nights worrying about the noises out here when my door's shut,” said Maria, who lives in an Single Room Occupancy, or SRO, hotel. “The hotel sounds so hollow. Anybody yells, there's an echo.. Everybody in here – every room is the same – we all have tempers. One word can set us off, like ‘what did you say...?’ ‘Cause we've all had bad lives on the street. But when people come into our home – because it's labeled as a hotel, people on the street feel as if it's OK to come into this hotel. But we live here – we don't have anything else.”

For some clients, the key to making positive changes has been turning to social service agencies, both for tangible and emotional support.

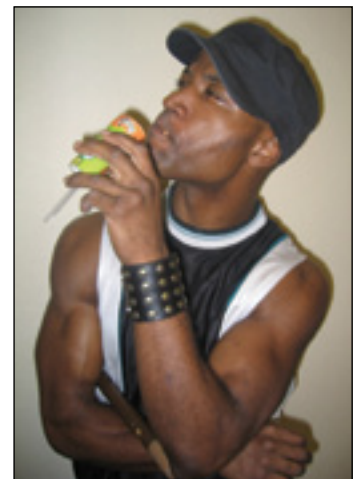
“The ideal agency would treat you like a friend and have a caring heart and you wouldn't have to deal with confusion,” described Solo. “And they would pray with you.”

**All together**

Beyond agencies and other outside help, many clients turn to their friends and family who also struggle in their community for support. Yet the key for fighting this struggle, as John Conner sees it, is to realize that the community you are in is larger than the people you think you already know. And for John, this larger community can be created and embraced through music.

“If it wasn't for music, period, I don't think we'd interact with anybody,” said John. “Because music... it might remind you how you feel and if someone else is feeling the way you feeling, then you all together in a way. Then color doesn't matter because it's like, if I'm feeling oppressed and you feeling oppressed, there ain't no difference. There ain't no difference in nothing, we both the same. But if I feel like I'm better than you, and you feel like I feel like I'm better than you, then that is a separation.”

And once we realize how we're united, we can begin to celebrate all that makes us unique and diverse. Because without this diversity, as Maxine put it, with a laugh, “This world would just be really boring.” ■



**I'm trying to give back to the community, instead of giving in to the community.**

**--Leah**

**Leah  
Downtown Client**

*How would you describe yourself?*

Intelligent, smart. I have a lot of potential, I'm nice. I'm just sort of a people person. I'm the class clown.

*How do you see the community you're a part of?*

Right now I'm not part of any community anymore. I'm graduated from being a crystal meth head and stuff like that. Nowadays I'm just trying to straighten out my life so I won't go back to the penitentiary. I'm trying to give back to the community, instead of giving in to the community.

*What's something that someone who knows you well would be surprised to find out about you?*

My mom, my dad, my sister, my brother, are used to me being always in jail, slinging dope. They're always telling me to get a real job behind a desk. So I want to prove them wrong, go to city college, get my GED. I just want to prove everybody wrong, that I can do it if I put my mind to it.

*Where would you like to see yourself in five years?*

Five years I'd like to see myself married with children. I don't want to see myself struggling, like I'm struggling now. I want to see myself being like my mom,

'cause she's a successful woman. I want to follow her footsteps, and I'm trying. Every time I try I fail, so I want to try not to fail.

*What are your favorite things to do?*

I like to write sometimes. It's something to do to keep me out of trouble. I can express my feelings, how I feel about this, that and the other person. I write my feelings down, first, before I be able to say it. 'Cause I can't say it sometimes. But lately I learned to say things on my own, so I'm feeling real proud of myself. ■

## Something has to be done

During the past year, ATC has experienced an overwhelming amount of death in the community it works with. In particular, there has been an alarming rise in the number of young black and Latino clients who have been shot.

Sadly, ATC is not alone in this experience. Throughout the Bay Area, there has been a tragic rise in the homicide rate. (More than 170 people have been killed so far this year.) The majority of people who die are young men of color, killed by gun violence.

Our clients have so many friends and family members who have been shot and killed that they barely have the space to grieve anymore. Our staff has been to far too many memorial services.

San Francisco government has recently paid a lot of attention to violence prevention, but competing ideas have created gridlock. While we wait, young people die. Although the violence is not the government's fault, it is the government's responsibility. When violence prevention is discussed from the community services standpoint, the focus is often on job creation and after-school programming.

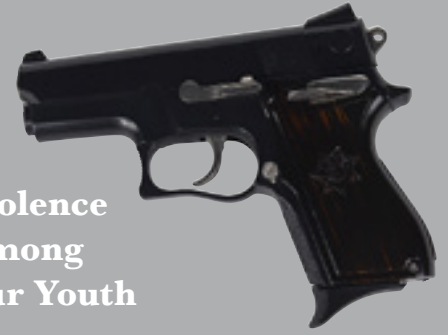
Frequently overlooked is the issue of housing, which absolutely must be a primary component of any initiative. Many (though not all) of these young men who have been getting killed have been involved in the street economy, which frequently leads to violence.

In the case of our clients, they are not getting rich working on the streets. Safe, stable housing would significantly reduce the need to turn to the streets for money.

Our clients are trying to make enough money to pay for expensive, substandard hotel rooms and for food. They are also often helping support their immediate and extended families.

If these young people did not have to participate in the street economy, they would not be surrounded by as much violence, and lives could be saved.

While housing is not the simple answer to this complex problem, it is an often overlooked tool in reducing violence in this community. We cannot continue to let young lives end before they really get started. ■



## Violence among our Youth

### SAN FRANCISCO

96 2005 murders in San Francisco (a 10 year high)

69 2006 SF murders through September (on pace to match or surpass last year's total)

### CALIFORNIA

Violence leading cause of death for 15-24 year olds in California. California leads the nation in incarcerating juveniles: 549 per 100,000 in 1999.

10,000 number of California youth booked into juvenile halls per day

### UNITED STATES

6,846 15-24 year olds killed by gun violence across the nation in 2003

18 average 15-24 year old deaths per day.

Statistics from the San Francisco Police Department, [preventviolence.org](http://preventviolence.org), and the Legal Community Against Violence.

## New Staff and New Roles at ATC



Joy Brown

Old Faces in New Places. That's the theme of the ATC staff transitions that have occurred in the past few months. In August, **Joy Brown** joined the staff as an Outreach Counselor Downtown. Joy had been volunteering on outreach with ATC for six months before joining us full-time. When a position opened up on our staff, the choice was a no-brainer. As a volunteer, Joy had wowed all

of us with her inquisitive mind, open heart, and commitment to our clients. Since joining our staff, she has continued to wow us with her ability to make random and ridiculous observations, her collection of Safeway soda cans and her total dedication to consuming fast food. A longtime fan of The Simpsons (seasons 4-8), Joy invites anyone to a random discussion of the show or just an old-fashioned quote-off.

Joy is replacing **Tori Talavera**, who has moved into the role of Program Manager, where she'll be earning the big bucks. Over the past two years, Tori's consistent, tireless dedication to her clients has been amazing. She leaves no stone unturned when it comes to finding resources to help improve their lives. And she always seems to have the most fashionable clients, which is noteworthy yet insignificant.



Tori Talavera's "alter-ego."

Tori's tenacity and commitment will serve her well in her new role, where she will oversee the direct services of ATC, making sure that we continue to provide the highest quality of support in the face of growing demand on our time. We are excited to see what Tori accomplishes in this leadership role.



Kelly Brandon

The outgoing Program Manager, **Kelly Brandon**, will temporarily be in the role of Director of Special Projects before moving onto the role of Volunteer Coordinator, which she will be working in part-time while going to nursing school.

As Program Manager, Kelly made a permanent impact on ATC by creating new policies, building a sense of cohesion on our staff, and helping lead our first real staff retreat. In her interim role, she will be helping revamp our staff training and development curriculums. In her future role, she will build new ways for volunteers to get involved in ATC, making us a stronger organization with a broader reach. ■



# 2006 thank you! (so far!)

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The Jackson Family

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Information Resources, Inc.

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Learn iT!

Levi's

Mandarin Oriental San

Francisco

Panache

Rainbow Grocery Cooperative

Safeway

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San Francisco Marriot

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Union Bank of California

Urban Outfitters

Whole Foods

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California Wellness Foundation

\$75,000\*

GGG Foundation \$50,000

Anonymous \$45,000

**Louis R. Lurie Foundation \$35,000**

Nick Traina Foundation \$25,000\*

**Silver Giving Foundation \$25,000**

Louis and Claude Rosenberg, Jr.

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Morris Stulsaft Foundation

\$15,000\*

**van Löben Sels/Rembe Rock**

**Foundation \$15,000**

**Union Bank of California**

**Foundation \$10,000**

Cleo Foundation \$10,000

Wells Fargo Foundation \$2,500

I&G Charitable Foundation \$1,000

## CORPORATIONS

Check Point Software

Technologies, Inc. \$2,500

Gap \$1000

Levi's \$3,000

**Monster Mutt LLC \$250**

Timbuk2 Designs, Inc. \$420

Whole Foods \$679

## OTHER IN-KIND DONORS

Community Karma

Condom Distribution Program,

SFDPH

Habeas Corpus Resource Center

## DISCOUNTED GOODS PROVIDERS

San Francisco Clothing Bank

San Francisco Food Bank

**Bold indicates donors who have supported**

**us annually, for at least five years**

**\*Donors who have supported us**

**annually, for at least three years.**

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<sup>2</sup>Donors who gave in memory of

Martha Laurance

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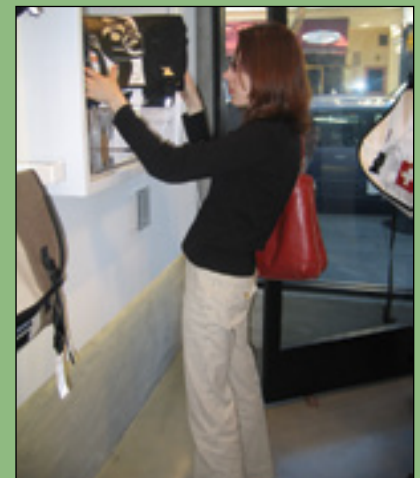
<sup>8</sup>Donors who gift was matched by

a generous donation from

Union Bank of California

## What will Timbuk2 do next?

Okay, okay, so you're probably wondering why we keep featuring **Timbuk2** in our newsletters. Well, they keep doing amazing things for ATC, and we want to let people know about it. This summer, Timbuk2 held their first ever benefit auction at their brand new store, and decided to make ATC the beneficiary. Nine artists from around the country created artwork on the canvas of Timbuk2 bags, and donated them for the benefit. Additionally, **Nicholas Coley**, a longtime client of ATC, donated a painting that was raffled at the auction. The evening raised over \$6,000 for ATC, introduced more than 100 new people to our work, and showed people a great time! Timbuk2 continues to donate a portion of the proceeds of the sales of their ongoing series of artist bags to ATC. We would like to thank **Macy, Julie, Nancy, Kate and Amy** for organizing the event, **Asqew Grill** for donating the food, and the nine amazing artists for donating their work! It is incredible how much impact one local business can have on our organization; we feel lucky to be partnering with Timbuk2. ■



One of Timbuk2's and ATC's supporters checks out a one-of-a-kind designer Timbuk2 messenger bag at the first ever Timbuk2 benefit auction.

# thank you!

## Summer Volunteers to the Rescue

ATC's staff members work their butts off, and occasionally, they take well-deserved breaks. During this summer, while we were short two staff members, it would have been impossible to allow our employees to take vacations had it not been for the special efforts of our summer volunteers. While many people pitched in, three individuals were truly indispensable.

**Becky Johnson**, a longtime volunteer of At The Crossroads, spent two days a week with ATC, going on outreach, organizing our clothing, helping ATC get in-kind donations, and doing anything we asked with her trademark humor and enthusiasm.

**Gabriella Rodezno**, a student at UC Santa Cruz, spent the summer interning with ATC. She went on outreach twice a week, conducted research on other community organizations that can benefit our clients, and ran more random errands than we can count. She also made a splash when she smacked one of our employees in the back of the head on her first day for being too nice to her. (It's okay. It was her sister, Shawn, who works with ATC).

And **Elizabeth Hart** came in every week to put away our food delivery from the food bank, keeping our food cabinets stocked and organized and our supply room floor clean, quietly going about her job utilizing her outstanding organizational skills.

Between the three of them, Becky, Gabriella and Elizabeth got us through a difficult period, and earned our eternal appreciation. ■



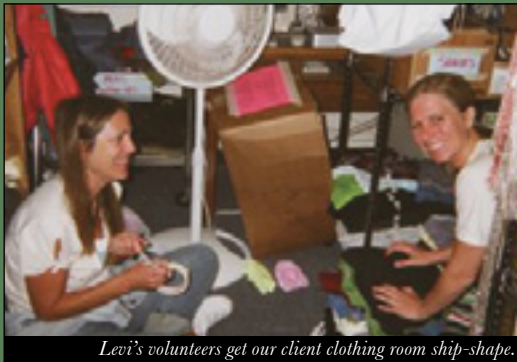
## Lots and Lots of Latex

Each year, we hand out about 60,000 condoms and 6,000 tubes of lubrication. Yes, there is quite a bit of sex occurring in San Francisco, in case you didn't already know. Thanks to the **Condom Distribution Program**, ATC clients are having safer sex, and we don't have to pay a single dime for it.

For the past seven years, CDP, which is a program of the San Francisco Aids Office, has been supplying ATC with all of the free safer sex supplies that we need.

It frees up our money to pay for other needed supplies, like food, toothbrushes, and tampons. **Betty Lew**, the head of CDP, has been a pleasure to work with, always doing everything she can to make sure that we have all the supplies we need.

CDP works with a number of different organizations in San Francisco to reduce the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, and to prevent unwanted pregnancies. CDP is a vital resource for ATC and many of our community partners. ■



*Levi's volunteers get our client clothing room ship-shape.*



*Gap volunteers make holiday cards.*

## Our Community of Helpers

About four years ago, ATC started having monthly supply volunteer prep nights, where four or five people would come by and make chocolate packs, q-tip bags, or other items that we hand out to our clients during outreach.

Fast forward to 2006. We currently have two monthly prep nights, totalling about 40-50 people. Every month, one of these events is hosted by **One Brick** or **Hands On Bay Area**, two local organizations that host volunteer events for nonprofits. One Brick has been partnering with ATC for about two years, HOBA for the past six months. These two organizations have introduced more than 300 new people to At The Crossroads, who have not just helped prepare supplies, but have

also become donors, in-kind donors, website volunteers, and even ATC staff members.

HOBA has also hosted corporate volunteer days for employees of the **Gap** and **Levi's**, who did an incredible job organizing clothing and making cards for our clients. Both companies have also subsequently donated a ton of apparel and other items, making our clients oh so happy.

All told, all of these prep volunteers have saved our staff more than 1,000 hours of their time, enabling hundreds of clients to get 1-to-1 support from our counselors that would otherwise be impossible to provide. Thank you to all the great individuals who contributed their time and energy during the past year! ■

# Clients' Corner

Poem and skull graphic by Big Brad; Graphic by Michael Fisher; cover of a 'zine put together by Sean.

*To what end will I defend the beliefs  
I depend upon?  
Take away the visits I  
won't receive deceive me  
when I call for  
reassurance A  
skeptical mind  
I find indearing  
points of view  
clouded & proud  
ignorance  
surrounds me  
now...*

*The fences are  
boundries they deceive  
my sight I'm told I  
can be happy then why  
must I fight in this  
world of misery must I  
sustain? My Hurts beyond  
Pain*

— Big Brad



## Outreach Volunteers Get a Peek Inside the World of Clients

Some of the people with the most unique perspective on the diversity of At The Crossroads' clients are our outreach volunteers. These volunteers come out with us one night a week, providing vital support to our counselors and observing all the different kinds of people we meet and help on the streets.

The differences our outreach volunteers see are so broad that none of them thought it possible to encapsulate the "average" ATC client.

"There isn't one description that captures the spirit and or character of each person," said Gabriella, an outreach volunteer for the past year and half.

What does unite most clients is their willingness to treat ATC counselors and volunteers with respect and care.

"The other day someone came up to me and Ivan and said we needed to get off the street, for our safety," described Naomi, an outreach volunteer for the past six months. "So we left, of course. But it was cool that they were watching the outreach people's back. Like they would watch some of their friends, that's how much they respected the program."

Clients' respect for the program is mirrored by how close our volunteers

come to feel to the people they meet on outreach. This is made painfully clear when a client passes away.

"It is a heartbreaking thing to have a shrine at my house piling up with the obituaries and remembrances of clients I know," said Becky, who has been going on outreach for the past two years.

Volunteers have also been surprised at the way that clients have been deeply affected by the passing of their friends, and the close bonds that form while people struggle together to survive on the streets.

"They look out for each other," said Gabriella, remembering one incident where a client had allegedly overdosed and died. "She was taken away in an ambulance and within 15 minutes of the incident about six people talked with us about it and were devastated by the situation."

But even with all the heartache that comes from the loss of a friend, volunteers have also seen how the community clients create helps them support and defend one another.

"It feels like they're family," said Naomi. "It feels like any type of community where they understand each other." ■



*At The Crossroads is a project of the Community Initiative Funds of The San Francisco Foundation. If you would like a copy of one of our previous newsletters, send us an email, and we'll send it to you as long as we have some left (we have a limited supply).*