

At The Crossroads Newsletter

Summer, 2005

In this newsletter, we focus on outreach, the center of ATC's work.

We hope it provides you with a better understanding of what outreach means to ATC, the community, and our clients.

As Mayor Gavin Newsom pushes his outreach program, often touting it to the media as one of the first of its kind, we'd like to take note of the organizations that have spent years walking the streets to meet those in need.

Reaching Out

Calles — Taking Care of the Neighborhood

One of the oldest and most widely respected outreach organizations, Calles, has been offering its support to gang-affiliated and other youth and young people in the Mission since the early 1980s. In recent years, Calles has joined forces with the Community Response Network (CRN), a collective of several other local organizations that serve similar populations of young people.

“Outreach is about us being visible, and getting the program out there,” said John Torres, who has coordinated CRN's outreach efforts for the past two years and has more than eight years of outreach experience. “It's about taking care of the neighborhood.”

On the first and third Fridays of every month, CRN staff and volunteers head out at 6 p.m. to visit the various “hot spots” in the Mission where gang-affiliated youth congregate. They see anywhere from 70 to 120 youth every two months.

Sometimes they just have casual conversations, no more than a minute or two to find out how things are going. For the more detailed situations, like for those people who are having problems with their immigration status, John and his volunteers invite them to come to the CRN office to meet with one of the case managers.

“It takes more than one little piece,” said



John. “A holistic approach to helping people is needed. I know from experience that making a difference through outreach is a longer-term thing. We focus on their assets and talents for them to work on, and involve them in activities that relate to their skills.”

Women's Community Clinic — The Spirit of Community

Emalie Huriaux also looks to build on the skills of the people she meets on outreach — in her case, women in the Mission.

“We help women identify positive factors in their life, and empower them to make changes, no matter how small,” said Emalie, the outreach coordinator for the Women's Community Clinic (WCC).

The first small step towards change begins on outreach, when Emalie and WCC volunteers meet women from 7 – 10 p.m. on Monday and Tuesday nights. WCC's outreach support includes basic supplies and referrals to a variety of health and service agencies throughout the city.

When WCC started doing outreach in 2001, they would primarily walk the streets.

However, on the advice of the women they were meeting, they realized that there were dozens of other women who lived in the numerous residential hotels in the neighborhood, who were isolated and alone and who could greatly benefit from WCC meeting them where they were. Today, WCC outreach workers meet the majority of the approximately 20-30 women they see every night in these hotels.

Outreach like this can be especially important for homeless women, who, as only approximately 30 percent of the overall San Francisco homeless population, do not have as many services targeted to them as homeless men do. Through outreach, WCC “brings the spirit of the clinic to women who might not otherwise get it,” described Emalie.

Many though not all of the women WCC meets are either current or former sex workers. WCC does not require or even encourage them to stop doing sex work in order to get their services, but instead provides the women a space where they can learn how to keep themselves safe.

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At The Crossroads 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.



Letter from the Director

Rob Gitin

I had a lot of trouble figuring what to write in this letter. The theme of this newsletter is outreach, and I've thought about it so much that I have completely lost perspective on what might be interesting for someone else to read about. After many failed attempts at a letter, I'm just going to share a couple of stories that will hopefully give you a better idea of the value of reaching out to people and meeting them where they are.

A couple of years ago, a girl named Janet was in the process of trying to get clean, stay out of jail, and hopefully get off of the streets. We had been working with her for four years, and she had just started to take significant steps forward in her life. In order to accomplish her goals, she was obligated to meet with two different counselors in addition to ATC counselors, one at her methadone clinic and one at "drug court," an alternative sentencing program for drug offenders. She was complaining to her drug court counselor about having to talk about her life to all these different people, whether she wanted to or not. This counselor asked her why she still met with At The Crossroads counselors, when she didn't have to. In recounting the story to me, she explained, "I asked her [her drug court counselor] what would happen if tomorrow I got high, and told all three counselors. You would send me back to jail, my methadone counselor would probably kick me off methadone, and ATC would buy me some food and ask me how I'm doing." Janet hasn't been on the streets in three years, and is studying to become a health counselor for incarcerated and drug-addicted women. And every week, we still take her out to lunch and ask her how she's doing.

Earlier this year, I was meeting with a client named James who was living in a hotel room with his girlfriend. James was opting for a security job at a local concert hall to make ends meet, trying to stay away from selling drugs on the streets. I was asking him whether or not he missed anything about street life. He talked about playing dice, joking around with his friends, setting his own work hours, and being amused by the crazy happenings all around him. He then mentioned that he missed seeing us on outreach. I was confused, because we were still seeing him during the daytime for 1-to-1 meetings. He explained "Every time I saw you guys walking up to me when I was on the streets, I felt reassured that there were people who cared about me. For you to come to me told me that I was important to you. I knew you'd always be looking for me, and it was cool to know that I mattered to you."

About two years ago, I ran into a client named Marlon who I hadn't seen for a long time. He asked me why I wasn't on the streets as much anymore, and I explained to him that my responsibilities had changed, and that I was only on the streets one night a week. Usually, when I explain this to kids I know, they ask me if I've been promoted, assuming that I must be moving up if I have an office job. However, Marlon asked me if I'd been demoted, or if I was being punished. I told him no, and asked my why he would think that. He simply told me "Because nothing that you are doing could be more important than being on the streets."

Rob

At The Crossroads

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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.
- ← On outreach, we listen to young people talk about their lives. We build trusting, non-judgmental counseling relationships, help them identify personal goals, and support them to achieve those goals.
- ← When youth express interest in working with us beyond outreach we meet with clients, 1-to-1, in a public space of their choosing. We listen to them and help them create a realistic plan of action, as well as provide tailored referrals to other services.
- ← We do not exit our clients if and when they leave the streets. We continue to work with clients through this transition, for as long as they want.
- ← We work closely with a number of 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.

Get Involved with At the Crossroads

Make a donation to ATC.

Try it; it's great fun. 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. If you are one of those people, we hope that you will make a donation that feels meaningful to you.

Checks should be made payable to "At The Crossroads, SFFCIF" or make a credit card donation at www.atthecrossroads.org.

Volunteer your skills. Donate items on our Wish List.

When people donate items on our Wish List or their time and skills, we are able to keep program costs down and put more of our funds into the direct work with clients. Could you donate tech. support, web design, legal, or accounting skills? Other ideas? Find our Wish List on our website: www.atthecrossroads.org.

Volunteer to go on street outreach.

Volunteers accompany Counselors on the street – carrying supplies like drinks and socks. Find out more about the criteria and process for becoming an ATC Outreach Volunteer on our website. Email **Kelly** at kellyb@atthecrossroads.org if you are interested.

Join our Supply Prep Team!

Help us prepare supplies for outreach to our clients by making candy packs, bunching socks, and bagging soaps and Q-tips. It's easy, relaxing, fun – and a great way to get to know ATC staff and other supporters. Plus, it enables us to put more time into the direct work. Prep Nights are scheduled on every last Wednesday of the month. If you would like to be notified about upcoming prep nights, email **Rob** at rob@atthecrossroads.org.

HELP US GROW...

Expand our network.

Do you know others who might be interested in hearing about or supporting ATC's work? Please let them know to increase our base of support! If you'd like, we'll provide you with a packet of information – or pass on our newsletter and/or direct people to our website: www.atthecrossroads.org.

Be creative.

We're open to hearing your ideas for supporting ATC. Is there some way that you'd like to help that we haven't mentioned? Let us know – we're excited to find out!

Any questions, please feel free to contact us through email (getinvolved@atthecrossroads.org) or phone (415-487-0691)

This includes testing and screening opportunities for various sexually transmitted diseases, and also news collected about bad “dates,” with physical descriptions or vehicle types of guys who have threatened other sex workers.

“We’re there to keep the women as safe as we can,” said Emalie.

WCC is also there to meet more than basic survival needs but to do small things - like offer make-up and clothes - that make women feel better about themselves. “Women are the same, whether they’re homeless or not,” said Emalie. “We help make them feel like women, not little girls.”

Horizons - “Whoever needs anything, I’ll be there”

Donna Saffioti-Johnson also knows the importance of helping people feel good about themselves. Donna has made a name for herself among the Mission and downtown community as the woman you turn to when you don’t know where else to go. It’s a reputation that’s not too surprising for someone who has been doing street outreach in the city for the past 17 years.

“It’s what I really enjoy doing,” said Donna, a Senior Substance Abuse Counselor at Horizons Unlimited of San Francisco, Inc.

Shortly after joining Horizons, Donna helped establish a needle exchange site in the Mission. Seeing a kid sharpening a needle on concrete one day was enough to push her into action, and soon she started a secondary needle exchange site, this one in an alleyway in the Tenderloin, where she’s been every Tuesday night ever since.

“Everyone knows where I’m going to be Tuesday night,” said Donna. “Somebody will walk in who hasn’t been around for 15 years and I’m still here.”

From that first step onto the streets, Donna has since ventured to almost every nook and cranny in the city where someone she can help might be living. She goes into residential hotels, camping sites, abandoned buildings – she’s even been known to invite people to meet her at her own home.

“Basically, whoever needs anything, I’ll be there,” she said.

Aware of the needs of the neighborhood, Donna responds as she can. On a shooting death anniversary in the Mission, Donna helped organize healing circles for friends and family to process their grief.



“If they’re in a crisis mode, you gotta go to them,” said Donna. “Otherwise, too many people fall through the cracks. Some folks are never going to come to an agency. I’m a grown woman and sometimes it’s hard for me to take how some people talk to me. Imagine how they feel.”

A Little Tough Love

With 40 years of outreach experience under his belt, Jack Jacqua knows that the problems facing the people he meets on the street aren’t about to be solved overnight.

“We’re not going to win [the fight against homelessness] tomorrow,” said Jack. “We have to take individual lives.”

Jack is constantly working to meet people and provide them with a trusting, open, one-man support system for whatever issues they’re trying to face. From when he walks out the door in the morning to when he comes back at night, Jack is engaging people about what they can and want to do to improve their lives.

“I live in the belly of it and I’m out all the time, constantly involved,” said Jack, who sees all the various organizations and “roles” he’s involved with – peer counseling director at Omega Boys Club, community counselor at Juvenile Hall, advocate and organizer at the Portrero Neighborhood House – as inextricably linked together and fed by his outreach work. “I’m always trying to get people to first believe in themselves.”

Jack isn’t afraid of a little tough love. If he sees someone on the streets who talks about wanting to stop selling drugs, for example, and then meets them later in jail facing

dealing charges, he’ll waste no time pointing out how they have to shape up if they want to change their lives.

“You have to have knowledge of the streets and the people you want to help,” said Jack. “The only way to know what’s going on in the streets is to be out there. This is the way to earn their trust.”

Once you’ve earned this trust, added Jack, that’s when you can begin to show them that the true difference will come from themselves.

“The solution to homelessness is not going to come from the politicians, or the police, or the churches,” said Jack. “It will come from those lives that we’ve touched, who will organize. I’ve already seen it in small ways.”

Outreach as Action

This desire to see the people of the streets take more of their lives – not just individually but as a community – into their own hands is at the heart of the outreach done by Coalition on Homelessness’ Civil Rights Project for the past 18 years. Rather than go out armed with hygiene and food supplies, however, staff and volunteers for the “Street Watch” program have a video camera, pens and paper, ready to record the true lives – and the true needs – of the homeless people they meet.

“We’re out to fight to show the other side of the story,” explained lead organizer LS Wilson. “Our agenda is to build from the bottom up, to talk to homeless people to find out what it is we should fight for.”

Four days (and nights) a week, Street Watch outreach workers travel to the favorite hang out spots for homeless people around the city. They engage homeless people in conversation and let them know that the true way to make a change in their lives is to make it at the core – to help change the policies that govern almost every aspect of their lives, from where they can sit, sleep, and eat to what hoops they have to jump through to get housing or public assistance.

“We’re just a bunch of advocates trying to make a difference,” said LS, noting that getting homeless people to speak on their own behalf is the most effective way to get politicians to sit up and notice. “It is more powerful coming from them.”

If there isn’t a pressing issue already on the political table, then the Coalition encourages homeless people to come and tell the city’s leaders what is important to them. And for those people who don’t have the strength, the means, or the time to make their voices heard by the politicians, the Coalition captures their voices and their ideas and bring them to the politicians.

and respect begins on outreach. During the daytime, Monday through Friday, HAYOT staff and volunteers walk the streets of the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood and the surrounding parks. They offer the youth they meet — anywhere from 20-60 kids a day — basic survival supplies, such as food and hygiene items, as well as referrals to local agencies to meet specific needs.

“Outreach is done so we can build relationships with youth on their turf,” explained Mary, adding that 85 percent of the youth that they meet also take advantage of HAYOT’s drop-in and needle exchange programs. “It’s a safe place for kids to get off the streets. They can hang out, and build community with other kids.”

Both on outreach and in the drop-in, Mary and her staff make sure that youth set the agenda. There is no expectation on the part of HAYOT that the youth they see will immediately stop taking drugs or get off the streets. Rather, “We let them identify their own goals,” explained Mary.

For the youth who want to deepen their relationship with HAYOT, staff are

serves an average of 90 youth every day, on outreach and at the drop-in center, with dwindling staff and resources due to funding constraints.

Jack sees a need for more committed people, and has no patience for the idea that someone doing outreach work needs to take a break from exposure to such intensity after a couple of years. “People who burnout, they weren’t really committed to the work,” believes Jack. “You only get out of it what you give.”

Even if you do give a lot, as Donna has, there is still the heartache that comes with the job. “You’re not able to do everything you want because you can’t,” she said. “You’ve got limited resources. You see what people have to deal with, and it’s hard. Because no matter what I go through, at the end of the night, I go home somewhere.”

We’re Out There, Too

But outreach workers see hope, too. “I see men and women in the Mission taking responsibility for each other and caring about each other,” said Emalie. “I see them looking out for what happens in each other’s lives.”

Jack echoes this - he doesn’t care for people telling him how “wonderful” he is. “The best way you can give back to me is to take what I teach you and use it to organize your brother or your sister,” said Jack.

For many of the people doing outreach, the thing they most look forward is simply the chance to hang out with the people they meet and hear their stories.

“It’s so exciting everyday,” said Donna. “I meet poets, artists, kind souls. I love that. I love seeing people and their strengths and ingenuity.”

Mary relishes slow days when she has the time to sit and talk for an hour, hour and half. “I love seeing kids as they really are, as opposed to how they project themselves when they have to come into an office environment.”

In fact, it’s the little moments collected from years of outreach work that drive the bigger work forwards. “It’s satisfying to give a kid a ride home, get them off the street, or go around the corner to laugh a little bit, crack some jokes,” described John. “It’s great to have them know that we’re out there, and being out there with them, too.”

“Right now, a lot of programs have barriers and requirements that homeless people can’t meet,” said LS. “It breaks their pride, breaks their back, and they’re just going to give up. We’re here to try to get their side of the story out there.”

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Haight Ashbury Youth Outreach Team — The Outreach Core

Mary Howe knows how to create an environment where homeless and street youth feel comfortable sharing how they feel, and aren’t pressured to conform to the standards and expectations set by an agency. And as center manager for the Haight Ashbury Youth Outreach Team, Mary believes setting this tone of comfort

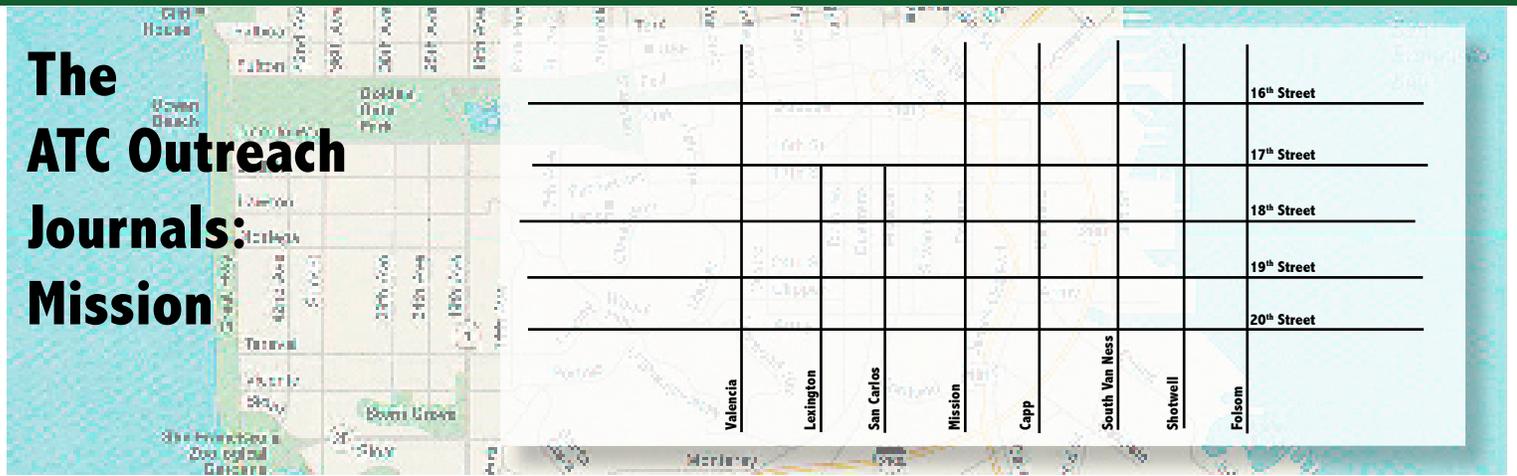
available to help them take further steps towards their goals, such as help them get on social security, or navigate the bureaucracy to get their first ID card in years.

Yet Mary believes that none of these options and opportunities for youth would mean anything if HAYOT wasn’t first reaching out to youth. Insists Mary, “Outreach is really at the core of what we do.”

Living Without a Home

Of course, even for those people who see outreach as a vital component of reaching homeless people, there are still lots of challenges with outreach work. Mary

The ATC Outreach Journals: Mission



The following journals are designed to give you a sense of what a night of outreach is like for our four outreach counselors, two in the Mission and two Downtown. The journals are a composite of several days of work; all client names have been changed to protect their privacy.

Once our bags are packed, we move on to making PB&Js. In the Mission we carry a dozen sandwiches. Ironically, these sandwiches satisfy hunger, but also bring back all-too-real memories of incarceration. For every kid that takes a sandwich, there will be three that make a face followed by, “Hell nah, those remind me of jail.”

We add a few last minute special requests to our bags: extra pair of underwear for one client, two chocolate chip granola bars for another, a few last holiday gifts. Our night of outreach can begin.

On 16th between Valencia and Mission Dave is selling his drawings. Dave will talk sarcastically about his crystal meth use, how the world is an ugly place, how before he met his girlfriend he had given up on relationships but then again opened himself up to vulnerability with her. She gave him an ultimatum - if he doesn't get a job so they can get a place, then she doesn't want to be together anymore. Dave says since he came back to San Francisco from Seattle he started using crystal again and that if his girl leaves him he may give up on everything and start spiraling downward into drugs.

After Dave, we run into Paul, a new client, who was very surprised that everything we had to offer was free. He told us to “keep doing the good work” as he got some stuff and a card about ATC.

The block of Mission between 16th and 17th is a hotbed of activity, with all sorts of transactions. Some nights clients are sitting on the benches surrounding the BART, standing in store fronts, or weaving through

traffic. Other nights we get there a little late and the police have already questioned, harassed, arrested, searched or scared our clients away from the block. On a good night we may see 20 people on that one corner. The adults usually outnumber the young folks, so servicing a client can bring with it the desperate curiosity of those amongst the adult underserved. We have pre-made bags containing all the supplies that we can provide to adults, like bandaids, antibiotic ointment, and condoms, but with no food, because our supply on hand is limited.

Before we have taken a couple more steps, we hear “Hey Shawn and Max!” It's Jenelle, who makes a straight line for us. The guy she had been talking to yells at her to come back, but she responds with a quick “don't you ever disrespect me in front of my counselors.” She turns back to us, and as we get her a full bag of supplies, she tells us she is doing badly. She got beat up by six girls on 18th earlier. She thinks her abusive boyfriend, who is now in jail, sent the girls to beat her up. She wants to leave but has nowhere to go. Someone gets her attention and mid-sentence she wanders off.

Right after Jenelle, we see Brazil, who talks with us about how she just started working at the Center for Young Women's Development again. She says she hasn't used heroin in four days and how she has the munchies cuz she is smoking a lot of weed to compensate. She keeps meaning to come by and pick up a bag we have for her at the office but hasn't had time cuz she's working from 3-8 p.m.

Next we see Tiny, walking with her pimp. She tells us she was in jail for 160 days and that she caught another case while she was locked up for assaulting a C.O. She is holding a flower made out of a dollar bill with a stem and leaves and tells us this is her gift to herself. A few feet on we find Chocolate, who asks for a full bag and tells

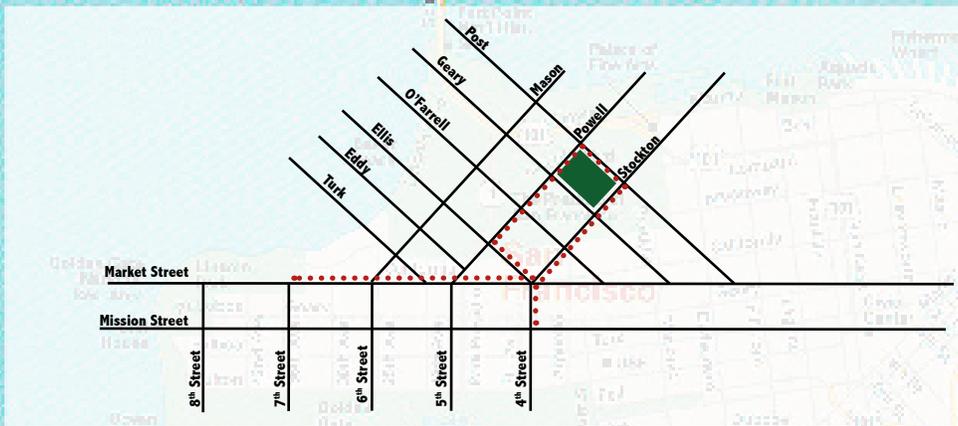
us she really likes the Strawberry Shortcake socks we brought out for her. She shows us her glittery pink nails that she just had done earlier in the day with a gift certificate we got her for her birthday.

There are also a number of adults who filter themselves in and out of our interactions with clients. There's Glenda, often leaning over in pain, dope sick, who lets us know how she's doing and that she will wait until we're done with our route to give her supplies and food. There's Sugar, who tells us to “hook her up with all the shit” and who we bring crackers or cookies because, even though she loves sweets, her teeth are bad. And there's Club, an adult who plays hide and seek with us and loves our PB&Js.

As we cross 17th, we try to gauge the terrain ahead, looking for the usual signs of challenges, people yelling, or sirens. We see Justine, a sex worker who prides herself on remembering our names. She asks us for socks, then asks if we think she has on too much make up. She tells us she's doing laundry. She has all her clothes in a suitcase with wheels.

We cover the remaining blocks of our route and end on Valencia, at a local favorite coffeehouse. In front we find an aspiring musician, known as Simon. More so than just getting supplies, Simon seems to value, as most people do, quite simply being heard. He speaks about his health concerns, and seems to know about places that will treat his abscess, and places where he could access methadone to replace the habit that is no longer serving him. We talk for several minutes before saying our goodbyes, and “I'll see you tomorrow.”

The ATC Outreach Journals: Downtown



Our night of outreach starts in the prep room. We check in, we talk about our day, about any client things that might come up, then pack our outreach bags, make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and head out.

We start our route at the corner of 4th and Mission streets, where we see little Polo walking up to Market, and he wants candy. In front of Old Navy we run into a group of African-American young men, a couple fairly regular clients who don't talk to us a lot, just take supplies. With them is Jermaine, one of our longer term clients. He had let us know that his birthday was last week, so we were carrying his birthday gift and wanted to give it to him, but we couldn't get him to stand with us long enough.

We cross Market and go up Stockton towards Union Square. Here, we generally see clients who are squatter kids and clients who are actually looking for us — clients who have been seeing us for several years and know exactly how to find us. The nice part is that if they do catch us this early on our route, we can more easily stop and talk.

Today Peter, who recently got out of jail and has been talking a lot about not wanting to get strung out and repeat his pattern, looks like he's been sleeping on the streets again. He doesn't really talk on outreach, but he likes to get supplies, and usually meets with us regularly during the day to talk things out.

Then we walk down toward the cable car turn-around and Blondie's Pizza and the space toilet on Market. We have more memories of the space toilet than anywhere else on our route. We used to stop there every night. It was a good meeting spot for everyone — we've met a huge amount of our clients for the first time, we've watched people have conversations about huge life events, we've seen people overdose there. But the main thing that attracted people,

benches, are gone and the space toilet doesn't have the same appeal. That little stretch between the cable car turn-around and 5th street has become more barren.

It starts raining as we cross 5th, and usually here we see a group. We see Big Tom, who we haven't seen in a long time, since the holidays. We've been saving his holiday gift, and tonight we can finally give it to him. Big Tom is very pleasant, not super talkative, but he definitely makes small talk.

There is also a group of four guys, 19 or so, who have been out pretty regularly and get excited when they see we have candy. They proceed to tell us to give them everything even though that's not what they really want. Big Paul comes up, who only likes strawberry jelly. He asks us what kind of jelly we use, and he's pretty upset with us because we're in this raspberry jelly rut from the foodbank. But today he settled — "guess I'll take one."

When we get past that 5th street corner, right on the other side there's oftentimes a group of maybe 5-8 traveling older clients who identify themselves as urban campers. They come in and out of town a lot. We have a different relationship with these people than with our regular, night-after-night clients. With the urban campers, there are months-long intervals between when we see them, and that seems to propel them into talking more about what's going on and catch us up on all the details in their lives. Clients we see day-to-day tend to leave the details out.

When we get to Turk, we used to cross over to the other side of Market, to the Wall. It's called the Wall because it's a boarded up old store, but people write messages to each other back and forth to communicate with their friends. It used to be that everyone would hang out there, and it was a community area for all the travelers, but now they've installed a monitor camera that

informs people when they've been sitting there too long.

We cross Turk and we start seeing more adults than youth. And there are no shops open at all. A lot of our clients work at the Warfield, so whenever there is a concert, if it's not hectic, we still try to go by and see if we can catch anyone we know.

We get closer to Market and 6th Streets, and it's pouring down rain. Market has really cleared itself out. We see Rochelle, a long-time client who normally has really funny stories or at least some smart-ass comment to make. Everyone knows her and she's super friendly to us. It's always fun to run into her.

Here we take a break at the corner donut shop. It's usually pretty empty this time of night, and we've made friends with the employees, so they let us sit without having to order anything as we write down who we've seen so far. Tonight, a client, Hook, comes in. He was recently was hit by a car and has been physically uncomfortable and using more, but tonight he looks really good and says he's feeling really good. He gives us both hugs and takes some food and makes an appointment with us to get more supplies.

We keep walking up some more, in the rain. It's the last block, between 6th and 7th, the last big stretch. Tonight we see some clients that we don't know by name yet, they all just take socks and candy and keep moving along. It's still raining hard at this point and we don't think they wanted to get wet either.

On the way in, we see Rochelle again, with Rose and her little boy. We stand there for a little while talking about these really cool candy apples that Rochelle goes all the way to the pier to get. We talk about how you should never pay \$10 for a candy apple because it's just not worth it, but \$5 is.

And that's it.

And we'll do it all over again tomorrow.

ATC Personnel Updates:



Welcome to our new outreach counselor, **Ivan Alomar**. Ivan started in May as a counselor in the Mission. For Ivan, working at ATC is

something of a homecoming, as he grew up in the Mission, and he is excited to be able to make an impact in his home community. Ivan has dedicated his career to working with young people. He has spent the past eight years working with at-risk youth in a variety of capacities, most recently through Americorps as a youth program director. While he has only been with ATC for a short time, he has already made his presence felt with both clients and coworkers. He brings a great deal of heart, intelligence, and open-mindedness to his job, as well as his subtle wit and even-keeled demeanor. He is a very supportive team member, giving his coworkers kudos at every opportunity.

Lori Norcia has transitioned from the role of program manager to the role of Community Resource Director. As the CRD, she is in charge of building partnerships with other local programs and the city government to ensure that there is an accessible continuum of support for the diverse needs of our clients. Lori's passion for our clients and desire to see them have meaningful opportunities to achieve their goals will serve her well. Her work in this role has already made ATC much more effective at connecting our clients with important resources.

For the past three years, **Kelly Brandon** has done a fantastic job as a volunteer and outreach counselor, and has now taken over the role of Program Manager. Kelly raised the bar for ATC's standards for counselors, and we look forward to seeing what she accomplish. Her consistency, drive, and commitment to the organization will be incredible assets as she works to ensure the integrity and high quality of our direct services. She has already made a huge impact on many clients as a counselor, and will be able to make an even greater impact by supervising ATC's counselors.

Volunteer Profiles



Becky Johnson

Outreach volunteer since November 2004

How did you come to do outreach?

When I moved to California last year I found At The Crossroads while looking for a job. I didn't get the job, but Lori encouraged me to come and volunteer.

Have you done it before?

I've worked with direct support services previous to volunteering at ATC, but I had never done street outreach. My previous experience was in Catholic Worker communities that practice radical hospitality and direct action addressing the systemic causes of poverty and violence.

Why are you doing outreach?

I love meeting the clients; I love doing direct service to those who don't or can't find services elsewhere; I love to come and volunteer in a place where the staff realizes the connections between the politics and the reality of poverty and homelessness.

What has been interesting/surprising/challenging about outreach?

I have to say I have been very surprised at the culture of gratitude and self-care that exists at the office. Every week begins with a "check-in" where we talk about our week with our outreach partner and go over anything that is on our minds that might distract us from our work that evening.

Another thing I have found surprising about outreach is how much I have changed as a result of doing this work. I am much more comfortable in crowds than I was when I started – and I am learning to be quick-witted with come-back lines!

What else do you do with your time?

I work in child care as a nanny, and I'm a first year student at Starr King School for the Ministry, studying for a Master of Divinity. I hope to be an ordained Unitarian Universalist minister, eventually.



Victor Duron

he doesn't always look like this)

Outreach volunteer since November 2004

How did you come to do outreach?

I saw Lori and Kelly at San Francisco State University.

Have you done outreach before?

Kinda, I used to be the coordinator for an inner city youth program in Sacramento.

Why are you doing outreach?

All of the great changes you can make in the world have to start with community.

How do you feel about outreach?

How I feel varies. Sometimes I feel like I'm picking away at a mountain with a toothpick, sometimes I feel like I couldn't possibly be doing anything more important.

What's been interesting/surprising/challenging so far?

The most challenging part is getting past the feeling that we should be doing more.

How long have you been in the Bay Area?

I've been in San Francisco for 2 years.

What else do you do with your time?

I recently graduated from SFSU. In addition to this I'm the coordinator for the AIDS/HIV nightline and I do youth outreach or S.F. Suicide Prevention.



From left: Jack Jacqua, John Torres, Taj Mustapha

Wisdom and Knowledge

What do you get when you bring together seven people with over 100 years of collective experience working on the streets and in the mental health field? An amazing gift for the ATC staff!

In November, ATC convened two different panels as part of a two-day training curriculum for our staff that was designed to make us safer and more effective at counseling our clients. We convened these panels as a response to having two serious safety incidents occur on outreach, where one of our teams was physically attacked, and the other team was forced to give up their outreach bags. This training played a big role in helping us move on from these incidents.

The first panel was our gathering of “Experienced Outreach Workers.” The three participants were **Jack Jacqua** of Omega Boys Club; **John Torres** of Community Response Network; and **Taj Mustapha** of UCSF (and co-founder of At The Crossroads). Each one dropped knowledge on us in his or her own unique way. Jack overwhelmed us with his heart and passion. You don’t work the streets and the jails for forty years without a burning fire inside to help others. Jack is a legend on the streets, and after the panel, no one had

to wonder why. John shared many stories from his decade of working with gang-affiliated youth. He discussed the importance of safety and boundaries, and broke down his approach in a way that gave us all a new perspective on our work. John’s insight and caring enlightened all of us. Taj was able to offer the insight of both a founder of ATC and a health-care professional. She helped bring a medical understanding of the physical and psychological challenges that our kids experience, and put it in a context that we could use on outreach. She was her usual brilliant, compassionate self (Please come back to work here!).

The second panel was our “Mental Health Panel.” It consisted of **Marykate Connor** of Caduceus Outreach Services; **Nicole Livingston**, a private therapist and ATC’s clinical consultant; **Carolyn Kaufman** of Mobile Crisis; and **Jennifer Bissell** of Westside Mental Health. This panel covered a variety of topics, including working with clients with mental illness, dealing with psychotic clients, handling client crises, and counseling homeless people. Marykate discussed her years of experience working with mentally ill homeless adults. She gave us a ton of practical ideas on working with clients who have the dual challenge of being homeless and mentally ill, and also provided insight into the thought processes of people who are engaged in a struggle to survive. Nicole provided suggestions on how to engage people with mental illnesses in getting support in an unthreatening, non-judgmental manner. Carolyn offered tons of concrete advice on how to help people who are experiencing psychotic breaks without jeopardizing our safety. And Jennifer provided perspective on the particular needs of young people with mental illnesses. These four individuals combined to provide us with a number of valuable tools and ideas that we have been able to integrate into our work.

These seven individuals helped during our time of need. We were coming out of a very scary period, and they provided us with both inspiration and many useful concrete ideas. We are so grateful for their willingness to share their time and their experiences with us.



Fresh Dressed Like A Million Bucks

For about a year the clothing selection for clients at ATC was, to sum it up, weak. Since the San Francisco Clothing Bank closed in 2003, the quality and quantity of the new clothing that we have for our clients has steadily declined. However, Macy’s and Sean John are now quaking in their boots, because they’ve heard about the awesome selection over at our office. (Okay, that might be overstating it.) We could still use more gear, but three different groups have really stepped up to fill in the void.

Over the past few months, **Urban Outfitters** has hooked us up with everything from pink moon boots to green tank tops. Their eclectic mix of apparel has been extremely well received by clients. **Ashbury Images**, a non-profit program that provides silk screening services and employs formerly homeless or incarcerated people, has donated boxes of sweatshirts, t-shirts, and rain coats, which were deeply appreciated this winter by clients who were trying to stay warm and dry. **Exact Science**, a local urban designer and inspiration firm upped the size of their donation from about 50 t-shirts last year to about 500 t-shirts and 50 sweatshirts this past winter. Their hip hop influenced gear is a huge hit with our clients. Both ATC and our clients are truly grateful for the generosity of these three businesses!

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**Friendly Neighbor**

A few blocks away from ATC is the headquarters for **Timbuk2 Designs**, our favorite local business. 16 years ago, Timbuk2 started making bike messenger bags for San Franciscans. Today, Timbuk2 sells a wide variety of bags all across the country and has become ubiquitous in the Bay Area; you can't swing a dead cat without hitting someone carrying a Timbuk2 bag.

Five years ago, Timbuk2 started donating bags to ATC on an ad hoc basis. Every two or three months, we'd pick up about 30 bags from them, and give them away to our clients. Clients who otherwise would have thought we were losers now thought we were cool.

In the past year, our relationship with Timbuk2 has grown a great deal. In meeting with Timbuk2 CEO **Mark Dwight** and Marketing Director **Macy Allat**, we realized that both ATC and Timbuk2 shared the value of wanting to make our city a safer, better place for the entire community. Timbuk2 decided to increase its involvement with ATC to reflect their commitment to trying to address the homelessness problem in San Francisco.

- Timbuk2 now donates 50 messenger bags every two months, allowing ATC to choose the size and the color of the bags. This ensures that every client will be able to pick a bag that meets their unique needs. To date, we have distributed over 1,500 bags. Clients consistently tell us how much they love these bags!
- Timbuk2 staff members have volunteered on our supply prep nights.
- Timbuk2 helped make the holidays a happy time for our clients, staff, and volunteers. First, Timbuk2 made a generous donation of \$1,000 to support our holiday parties for clients. Mark Dwight then donated \$2,000 of his own money. Between these two donations, two-thirds of our holiday party expenses were covered. They then donated 18 gift certificates to ATC for our staff and volunteers, allowing everyone to get their own self-designed bag as a holiday gift. Some of their staff members came over to our holiday gift wrapping party, spending their free time wrapping presents for our clients.

Did we mention how much our clients love the bags?

Linda explained to us that she has her "Baby bag," for her infant daughter's diapers and toys; her "school bag," for books and school supplies after returning to school following a ten year absence; and her "crap bag," for taking all of her day-to-day stuff everywhere she goes.

Juan, who we hadn't seen in about four years, came back to town after traveling and living in other cities. We ran into him on outreach, and one of the first things he asked was whether he could get another Timbuk2 bag. He pointed to the one he was carrying, beat up, worn down, but still working after years of heavy-duty use. When our clients are traveling, it's rare for them to hold onto something for four months, let alone four years.

Chris was reconnecting with his family for the first time in a while. In the past year, Chris had stabilized his situation, getting indoors and sober. His family was coming over the holidays, and the vast majority of Chris's income was paying his rent. He had no money to pay for gifts. However, Chris ended up feeling very good about the gift he gave his mother, because she was thrilled when he gave her his Timbuk2 bag.



Client Perspective

Outreach is about people investing their time in the support of other people. You see a lot of outreach workers on the street, and they're going around and handing out food, and really what they're doing is opening themselves up to another person, whatever their problems may be.

To do outreach you have to be open — you have to be able to accept people for who they really are, whatever situation. You need to be totally there because you seriously have other people's lives in your hands.

See, a lot of people are scared to actually go into a place and talk to someone and admit their problems. It takes some time first of all to realize that you need that help and then it's going to take more time to find someone to help you with that. But if you see people on outreach on a continual basis, you know that they're actually out there to help you and that you can trust them.

I used to work for a group in Los Angeles, a drop-in center where I did peer-based counseling. I was 15,16 years old at the time, and I was also living on the street. I loved counseling. Two of my favorite things are getting dressed and talking to folks. I really love talking to people. Usually the biggest problem people had was that no one really listened to them. People would hear what they were saying, but they weren't really listening to them as far as what do they want to do with their lives. Pretty much all I do is listen. I learned once you talk to someone who says "I'm just here to listen," a huge weight seriously is lifted off your chest.

Cannon

ATC Client for four years

Project Homeless Connect



It's confusing. It's invasive. And for some, it's a waste of time.

Project Homeless Connect (PHC) is designed to locate chronically homeless adults in the city of San Francisco and place them into permanent housing. The problem is, there just isn't enough.

PHC is essentially a large "service fair," held once every other month in the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium. There are dozens of booths manned by Department of Human Services employees, ready to explain the various programs offered by the city and how to access urgent medical care, psychiatric counseling, methadone treatment, and SSI advocacy. There's also a food area, with meals and sack lunches for later, shower facilities, and even massages.

Sounds promising, but in order to get in, clients must reveal personal struggles, needs, and history to a complete stranger. They also have to leave their belongings in a holding area, and hand any pets over to the PHC Pet Care Volunteers. Off putting, to say the least. Following the intake process, clients are assigned a number and a volunteer who will then take them on to the fair's main room.

At the end of the day, counselors help prioritize what's most important for each client, then it's back to the street. Although the city organizers of PHC know that the number one priority is housing, there isn't any to offer. No housing means no way for case managers or counselors to follow up.

So after a long day of standing in lines,

At The Crossroads is a project of the San Francisco Foundation Community Initiative Funds. 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).

filling out forms, and waiting, most people leave Project Homeless Connect exactly as they came: homeless and unconnected.

A group of about 15 Community Based Organizations (CBOs), including At The Crossroads brought up some concerns about PHC with the Mayor's office. Ideas for improvement included:

- **Meet expectations**

By continuing to announce that people can get housing, PHC is making promises that they cannot keep and painting themselves as an untrustworthy organization.

- **PHC should avoid duplicating work**

CBOs already have relationships with people and will be able to set up proper case management needed to follow up on initial contact. PHC should invite CBOs to become involved in the running of the fair.

- **Volunteers need training**

Provide more appropriate and culturally sensitive training to the 500 PHC volunteers, so they know how to provide support and respect boundaries.

- **Services need to be used**

At the last PHC, some CBOs were asked to save already scarce slots in shelters for PHC clients. When the PHC client failed to show up, it was a waste of time and resources.

- **CBOs aren't a limitless resource**

Don't push CBOs already maxed out on their services and don't have the room or people power to be involved with PHC.

To its credit, the Mayor's Office staff acknowledges that PHC is still a work in progress, and that feedback from the non-profit organizations who work with homeless communities are a valuable part of making the project better. They are aware, for instance, that the Mayor's Outreach Team, a separate program, should be going out more regularly and for longer periods of time in order to reach the people they seek. As of now, they only go out once or twice a month, without a regular schedule, and only in the Tenderloin. There are no firm plans as of yet for the future of PHC or the Outreach Team. The fairs will continue to be held, yet it's too early to say what kind of positive impact the project will be able to make on the lives of the homeless.