

# Featured Citizen of the Month: Midge Wilson

Each month Tenderloin Police Station features a citizen who represents the unique and dynamic flavor of the Tenderloin community



Our featured citizen for the month of October is Midge Wilson. Midge is originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She attended Muskingum College in Ohio, where she obtained a B.A. in Sociology in 1972. Six years later Midge successfully completed a Master of Divinity at McCormick Theology Seminary in Illinois.

In 1980, Midge moved to San Francisco and settled in the Tenderloin, where she lived for 20 years. Shortly after her relocation Midge noticed that the neighborhood lacked resources and services for women and children. She met with Tenderloin pioneer Leroy Loofer, operator of the Cadillac Hotel, with hopes of opening a center. After applying for a grant, Midge opened the Bay Area Women and Children's Center (BAWCC) in 1981.

The center is located at 318 Leavenworth and serves low-income families, women, and children. BAWCC has a two-pronged approach to providing services: Direct Services (i.e., free clothing closet, food pantry, scholarship fund for Tenderloin youth, parent-child program and the TL Youth Sports Initiative); and Advocacy and Community Planning. As the partner agency for Tenderloin School, BAWCC provides: (library programs, technology programs, garden programs, after school clubs, a free dental clinic, parenting classes, literacy programs and a physical education program).

Some of Midge's achievements include working on the Tenderloin Children's Playground in 1995 and opening the Tenderloin Community School on Turk Street in 1998. The Tenderloin Community School project was an eight-year effort. As for the playground, Midge distinctly remembers opening day. Children were running in circles in the large open area adjacent to the play structures. Midge realized prior to the playground opening that kids in the Tenderloin had few places to run free and play except in the narrow hallways of the buildings in which they lived.

Midge also shared a rewarding experience with us that relates to her work with BAWCC. She described a woman who came to the center as quiet, shy and reluctant. The woman eventually became comfortable with the center and confided in Midge and BAWCC Staff. After some time, the woman blossomed into a volunteer at the center. This reinforced Midge's hope that the BAWCC had indeed become a safe haven to residents of the Tenderloin.

In the foreseeable future, Midge sees herself continuing her work at BAWCC.

Midge's hobbies include knitting, reading, cooking, and spending time with her family & friends. She especially enjoys spending time with her daughter Ashley and her one-year-old golden retriever (Kaylee). Midge adopted Ashley from Zhu Zhou, Hunan Province, China in 1994. Ashley is now a junior in college.

We appreciate Midge's countless efforts in making Tenderloin a better place.