

Bay Area Women's & Children's Center

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Year-End Progress Report **2013**

As many of you know, in past years I have written some very long reports to you about what is happening with **Bay Area Women's and Children's Center** and the children, families and women who come to us for services and participate in our programs. Other than updates on specific programs, I have not done that for the past couple of years, so I felt it was time to update you on what has been going on with BAWCC lately. It's a lot!

This report includes updates on many of our current programs, but I am also including a lot about BAWCC's history that goes back 34 years. That's really pretty hard for me to believe, especially since I've been around since the very first day...

I think it's best to start with what our current programs are at BAWCC, then---we'll take some walks down "memory lane"!

At our Center on Leavenworth Street (where we started in 1980) we provide:

Drop-In Services Program & Food Pantry Program
Tenderloin Youth Sports Initiative
Publications and Resource Guides
Tenderloin NETWORK of Children, Youth & Family Services
College Scholarship Fund for Tenderloin Youth
Advocacy on Issues of Children, Youth & Families
Long-Term Community Projects-Playgrounds, School...

BAWCC's Tenderloin Family Center, our on-site programs at the Tenderloin Community School (380-student elementary school) include:

Technology Program/ new iPad Initiative
Dental Clinic (in partnership w/ UCSF Pediatric Dentistry Div.)
Parenting Classes & Family Room staffing
Garden Program
Literacy Program (one-on-one and small group)
Family Fair (Spring Carnival)
Library Program (with SFUSD)
Food Pantry (partnering w/ SF Food Bank)

SAT” Structured Activity Time
After-School Clubs (10 different clubs each week)

Our Police Captain... An Old Friend...

Having a street-level Center, on what is arguably one of the most “dangerous” corners in San Francisco, means many things. One is that **it means that we ARE exactly where we need to be!** It also means that we really DO want to be on the radar of the police officers and captain in our district!

If you asked me over the past many years who the police officer was who knew our community best, and who watched out for us better than anyone in our 30 years, I would have told you, **“That would be Joe Garrity!”** Have any of you ever watched “Everybody loves Raymond”? Joe always reminded me of Ray’s police officer brother, (but really smart!). Among other things, he’s tall and has a great sense of humor. Joe was assigned to the Tenderloin for many years as a beat cop, but more than anyone in our decades here, he came into the Center just to check in. He made it a point to get to know us, and he made sure that our part of the neighborhood felt safe enough so that the women and families always felt okay about coming onto our block. *This has not always been an easy feat...*

Joe told me one of my all-time favorite stories several years ago when he dropped by the Center one day to check on us. He was telling me about his daily “coming to work” in the Tenderloin. As with many people who work in the Tenderloin, Joe and his family lived elsewhere. In his case, he lived in the East Bay, so he came to work on BART every morning. He talked about being on the train with other people who worked in the Tenderloin. Joe was telling the story in a very matter of fact, non-judgmental way, and then I realized that the people he was talking about were a part of the drug or crime scene. They knew Joe... he knew them, and they were all on their way to their “day jobs” (or maybe night jobs, depending on the shifts at the time). **Since Joe told me that story, I’ve always had this funny image in my head of Joe & the guys, bumping along on the BART train on their way to work. “Hi, Joe”.... “Hi, Charlie”... “Hi, Andy”... then Joe goes his way off the train, puts on his police uniform and goes to work, and the guys go to their respective blocks where they do their business...& in some cases, Joe is arresting them later. As I said, a very.... interesting... image in my head...**

About our Center on Leavenworth Street:

I guess it makes sense to back up and tell you a bit about **BAWCC**. I do know that some of you have been here to the Center... to donate clothing, to bring an Angel Child holiday gift, to meet with our staff about one thing or another, but for those of you who have supported us over the years, but never been to visit us, BAWCC is, as I often say, in the “heart of the Tenderloin”... and I do mean in the heart.

BAWCC is smack-dab in the middle of the Tenderloin—couldn’t get more in the middle. The edge of the Tenderloin is 4 blocks in every direction from the

corner that I am looking out at as I'm sitting here typing right now. We have a street-level (aka storefront) office that has a larger front room that is set up like a pretty, comfortable living room on one side, with the 3 desks for our core staff on the other side. Two of us have been here for a really long time... one of us, Nancy, for 29 years (since I hired her when she was 16 and as she puts it "fresh out of high school"... and for me, it's been even longer!

More than 400 women and families come into our Center on Leavenworth Street every month for help in many different areas of their lives. Diane and Nghi are our other two core staff members that staff our "Drop-In Services", & really do a wonderful job of working directly with the women and families who come in for help.

At this point, BAWCC probably has one of the longest histories of doing this kind of resource work with women, children and families in the City. It shows. Almost every week we have staff of other organizations call or contact us about resource information and advice. Some weeks, it's every day. We are always very happy to share any information we have with other agencies or city staff! In addition to this core staff that works primarily on Leavenworth, we have many other volunteers and advisory board members who work with us on specific projects & tasks. But... I certainly don't want to leave out our other full time staff member!

Kaylee - BAWCC's Secret Weapon:

In a past report, I started by saying "*women and families come into the Center for many different reasons, some need clothing, some need many kinds of support or information, some need food, and some come to visit our 'resident greeters'.*"

This is still true.

I started bringing my "sidekick" with me as soon as I started working at the Center in the early 1980s. First, it was my little blonde cocker, Mika, who charmed everyone. (She was even nominated by folks in the Tenderloin to get the SPCA's Pet Personnel Award – which she won. She was written up in the SF Chronicle, & I still have her ribbon up on the wall and the article written about her). Through the years, there have been others.

Kaylee, my golden retriever puppy, is our doggie-greeter now. She very sweet, and remarkably calm, and always makes us laugh. Some women come by almost every day just to see her.

I've often thought that if they put Gloria in a television show, everyone would think she was so over-the-top, that they would not believe she was for-real. Julia is Kaylee's buddy. She's one of my all-time favorites too (with an amazing "journey" that brought her to us, which she finally told me after a couple of years of knowing her). Julia has, I think, been "86ed from" (kicked out of) a number of agencies over the years, but she likes and trusts us, and she always treats us with nothing but respect. I like to think that that's because it is how she is treated by everyone here, but I also know that she gives us the benefit of the doubt because we are a part of Kaylee's family!

I've often thought that by having Kaylee... & Taya... & Mika... & Holly, and our other doggie staff here, we stumbled into a perfect way of being more "accessible" to

many women and families. The first time visiting any new place can be scary, especially so if you're feeling down-on-your-luck. I imagine many people come here for the first time thinking... "Will they be nice?" "Will they help me?"... "I don't even know what to ask for..." and, then there's Kaylee... wiggling up to them to say "Hi". Sometimes, I can just see people relax when they see her. I know that's part of what makes them feel "at home"... something we always want to happen!

Tenderloin Scholarship Fund ... And One Story:

In addition to our Drop-In/Direct Services Program at the Center, one of the long-time programs is our Scholarship Fund for Tenderloin youth who want to attend college.

Some Background on our Scholarship Fund: Twenty four years ago, a few of us associated with BAWCC were recognized by the Daniel E. Koshland Committee of The San Francisco Foundation for our work with youth. At one of our awardees' meetings, one of the young people who was being honored asked if he could use his stipend to help him pay for his own college expenses. (The stipend, we were all told, was to be designated to a neighborhood non-profit for their community work.) **He was told that it was not possible to use the stipend for himself, but it gave me an idea.** I asked the Koshland staff if BAWCC could start a Tenderloin Scholarship Fund ... and if so, if we could put our designated award money into the scholarship fund that BAWCC would create. I think the Koshland staff members were thrilled with the idea. I think they had really wanted to say "yes" to the young man, but could not because the funds were to be designated to go to a 501© (3) non-profit organization.

So, here we are, 24 years later, and BAWCC has given out 320 college scholarships to Tenderloin youth who want to go on to college, or are in college. We have two cycles a year, and we can get up to 11-12 applications per cycle from Tenderloin youth to consider. As I reviewed the applications, there were many write-ups that really touched me (as usual), but when I read one of them, I wanted to pass it along to you! This came straight out of the application form, verbatim (and as you may notice, English is not this student's first language). It's from a young woman who has lived in the Tenderloin for the past several years. She is attending one of the UCs in the fall.

"As the first person in my family to go to college, I have in my heart to be educated. I live with my Mom, she is a nanny. She told me that no matter what I do, I have to put my heart in it. To be a music therapist is my dream since I was a very young.

"Once, my grandpa was very sick in bed. He looked really pale, and refused to eat. Seeing this, I brought my gourd flute and played a few pieces for him. I could tell from his face that he enjoyed it, so I started playing instruments and singing to him every day. It worked. After a month, grandpa was able to walk. I was deeply impressed by the power of music and decided that I will use my music to help more and more people walking out of physical and mental illness,

and bring to the world the beauty of music. However, there is no way for my family to afford music lessons, so I took music classes at school.

“Just a year ago, I walked into a church and couldn’t help myself playing the piano during coffee hour. The music director David A. heard me playing and asked me to join the choir. Soon after he learned my story, he started giving me piano lessons, for free. He said I’m on scholarship. With the help of Mr. A. and my hard-working, I played the piano during service and accompanied choir a few times. On June 5th, 2010, I had my first piano recital at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church. People enjoyed my playing. Sometimes when I volunteered in the homeless shelter at St. Mark’s Church and welcome dinner at Old First Presbyterian, I played piano while our guests were eating. They enjoyed it.

“When I was accepted in UC Santa Barbara, I could see worry on Mom’s face. I insisted that no matter how much money I have to spend, I have to get education. I told her I will take care of all the loans, which is almost \$17,000 per year. I need help. I’m so glad and excited when Ms. K. (*at Galileo High School*) told me about your Tenderloin Scholarship Fund. **I see hope.** Thank you for being generous to people who have dreams”.

We Know How Fortunate We Are! We Get to See Movement.

As staff members here at BAWCC, we are well aware of how lucky we are that there are times when we get to see results of work that BAWCC does... this happens both on a very large scale and on an individual level. On the large projects, I think you know what at least some of our accomplishments are from our writing about them over the years. We co-led the effort to get the Tenderloin Children’s Recreation Center & Playground built. We conceptualized and led the efforts for the two playgrounds in Civic Center, and two more playgrounds in the Tenderloin, and we led the community effort for the creation of the Tenderloin Community School & on-site Family Center. Those are some of our long-term, successful projects.

On an entirely different level, some of the most gratifying work we’ve done over the years has been on an individual level. **This is what happened one day:**

About eight months ago, I was sitting at my desk working on a program timeline, and a very nicely dressed woman came into the Center. She asked if she could talk with me for a few minutes. I said “of course”, and I asked her to have a seat in the chair next to my desk. She sat down and said “I’m sure that you don’t know me, but I wanted to say thank you to your staff here. When I came to San Francisco, about two years ago, I was really at the bottom. I had to get away from an abusive situation in another state, I had almost no resources, and I didn’t believe in myself -- at all. I started coming into Bay Area Women’s & Children’s Center, and I always felt respected here. Even though I had a doctorate, I had been so beaten down by what had happened to me that I had no belief in myself. Everyone who worked here made me feel

welcomed and worth something. You have no idea how much you helped me. It made me feel like I could put my life back together, which I did”.

I know ... This must sound made up ... and that I just wrote the “script” for this, but I didn’t. In fact, as soon as she left, I wrote down all that I could remember of exactly what she said so that I could look at and appreciate it again in the future. Anyway, I just sat there and kept thinking, *“Oh my gosh... I am so happy for her... and how incredibly nice of her to come back and say that to us and let us know how she’s doing!!”* **Before she walked out, Deborah handed me a check for \$100 made out to BAWCC, along with her business card. She was program director at the SF Human Services Agency.**

See what I mean? ... How lucky are we to have experiences like that!?

TYSI - Our Tenderloin Youth Sports Initiative:

Another neighborhood-wide program that we created out of the Center was a youth sports initiative. In the past year, we provided many types of sports programs to more than 600 low-income children. Some of these took place on a weekly basis. Others happened every weekday throughout the whole school year.

A Little Background: In 2002, BAWCC was approached by a consortium of funders and we were asked to consider creating a neighborhood-wide youth sports pilot program for San Francisco. (They were familiar with BAWCC’s work in getting the Tenderloin School and the Rec Center built.) At first, it didn’t seem like a good “fit” to us, but after we realized that we could connect our youth sports programs to a “life lessons” curriculum, specifically, to the building blocks in Coach John Wooden’s Pyramid, then it made sense to us. We decided to take it on!

Since then, we have created many youth sports programs, and we work with 500-600 Tenderloin kids every year in these programs. Early on, 22 of us from BAWCC were lucky enough to spend an afternoon in LA with Coach Wooden. His Pyramid’s building blocks are an essential part of all of our youth sports work.

Tenderloin Community School & BAWCC’s On-Site Services:

If you know BAWCC at all, you are aware that BAWCC is the founding community partner of the Tenderloin Community School (a 380-student public elementary school) and has provided on-site programs at the school since the day it opened in 1998. This, of course, makes sense since BAWCC conceptualized and led the 8-year community effort that resulted in the school’s being built.

There are many programs that BAWCC has implemented that were identified by Tenderloin parents as community needs during the school’s planning process, **when the school was just a twinkle in our eye.** Other programs came about along the way as new needs were identified.

The Dental Clinic:

As with most things in life, we do have our “favorites”, and one of mine is a program that was chosen by the neighborhood parents to be built into the school, the Dental Clinic for the students! In the mid 1990s, a grad student in UC Berkeley’s School of Public Health, Kara, connected w/ BAWCC about volunteering. (*At the time, Kara was nearly done with medical school, but she took a “break” to get her masters degree, a Master of Public Health from “Cal”. Kara was also BAWCC’s first on-site pediatrician at Tenderloin school, and she’s still actively involved with us.*) We worked with Kara on putting together a Survey for Tenderloin Parents related to the services they wanted in the school.

About the Parents’ Survey: Having lived and worked in the Tenderloin for 15 years at that point, I had made some assumptions about what the results of the Parents’ Survey would be. **I was wrong**; or maybe I should say, surprised. The top choice of the Tenderloin parents surveyed was that they wanted a dental clinic built into the school. The more I thought about that, the more sense it made. The parents told Kara that their money just did not stretch to cover dental care, *especially* not preventive care. ***I was told once that the only time most Tenderloin parents took their kids to the dentist was if the child had a toothache that was bad enough that they woke their parents up in the middle of the night!*** So, as you can imagine, not much dental care was happening around here! ... until we set up the Dental Clinic at the School.

Another long story, but I’ll shorten it - We had worked with University of the Pacific, one of the dental schools in SF, for many months on the clinic design, but when it came time to actually start staffing and opening the clinic, we ran into a snafu with UOP. They had recently gone through several position changes with the head of their pediatric dentistry staff, and the two different chairs with whom I had worked were now gone, and...they had also recently cut their teaching staff. We waited...and waited... so I finally just asked the new chair to please tell me, one way or another, if they could staff the Clinic... either way was fine, we just needed to know so we could start figuring out a new “plan of action” if we needed to! We were told that UOP would not be able to help us right then. **Okay---at least we knew we had to go to PLAN B!**

Lucky us! “Plan B” turned out to be one of the best things that ever happened for BAWCC and for the families in this neighborhood! Through a friend’s pediatric dentist, we tracked down and set up an appointment to meet with the Chair of the Division of Pediatric Dentistry at UCSF, Dr. Pam Den Besten. *Not to be overly dramatic (but I think I will be), that meeting changed the course of so many Tenderloin kids’ lives!* **Pam just got it... right away!** We started working immediately on the MOU between BAWCC and UCSF, and a short time later, our Clinic was up and running... with Pam, herself, as the supervising dentist on site for the first couple of years... that’s how committed she was to the success of our Dental Clinic!

After eleven years, I could not be more pleased with how this program is going. This year, the Clinic worked with students for the entire school year. In fact, BAWCC just signed a second 10-year Memo of Understanding with UCSF, and last year, our

Clinic completed 1,400 procedures during Clinic hours. We are so pleased with this wonderful resource for these young students

Our Structured Activity/Phys Ed Program:

Another program that BAWCC created at the Tenderloin school is what we call the Structured Activity Time program (SAT Program). This program, based on one at a school in Leavenworth, Kansas that has become a national model, has been extremely effective with our students at the school.

Every day, the students have a structured physical education session in which they are constantly learning new sports skills (as well as consistently working on improving their sportsmanship). Many of our kids had never played organized sports programs before SAT came along. For instance, when our SAT staff first taught the game of kickball two years ago, half of the kids didn't know which direction first base was. Now, the students are getting a real understanding of what are actually quite complex games. Our kids are now able to tag up on a pop fly, turn double plays in the outfield, and remember what the inning, score, and outs are. Because of the extremely limited space in which the school's playground had to be created (it's an extremely small site compared to other California schools) and the short amount of time the students have for recess each day, students never got a chance to learn the rules of things like kickball, soccer, basketball, four square... games that were staples for many of us in our elementary school experiences.

This may seem to some to be a rather small "success", but for our BAWCC staff and many teachers, it's a huge source of pride watching these kids improve at something like this, and what's more, enjoying it so much. One of BAWCC's SAT teachers, Marri, wrote about one of the students in the SAT program...Algernon!

Algernon: One Student's Story in the SAT Program - Halfway through Algernon's third grade school year, he was moved out of his mainstream classroom at Tenderloin Community School and into the Special Day class down the hall. After nearly a year of failed attempts to find a successful behavior plan, for him and his twin, his brother was sent to another school, while Algernon went to a class with a high student-teacher ratio that was designed for Learning Disabled and Emotionally Disturbed students. It is, without a doubt, a challenging class!

---And, Algernon has always been a challenging kid. *Warning... if you think his story is going to end with a halo shining over his head, you might be in for a disappointment.* But what is important about Algernon's story is that over the last year, it is one of subtle yet steady improvement, particularly in SAT, and it's a story of how that improvement has had positive effects on both his peers and his own classroom behavior.

When recess was in place, and when the SAT program was first implemented, Algernon came up to the roof every day with his hood up, so large and floppy you could barely see his eyes. He spent most of his time dribbling a basketball in the corner or hanging onto the basketball net. If a teacher told him to stop, he'd generally respond with

bad language and he'd proceed to leave the roof and roam the halls. This led us to know one positive thing about Algernon-- he liked basketball.

Slowly, Algernon's classroom teacher began to work with him. He accompanied Algernon up to the roof for SAT time and did not let him leave the roof to traipse the halls. First, he was asked to simply sit and watch the games that were played at SAT. Then, if one of the SAT teachers was playing basketball, and if Algernon was in a favorable mood, he would occasionally, very quietly, be encouraged to ask one of the SAT teachers if he could play too. (Our SAT teachers, of course, would always say yes in the most nonchalant way possible, working to hide our enthusiasm that comes so rarely with students like Algernon). If he went for it, he'd pull his hood off and join the other kids. Sometimes, and this was in the most rare of occasions, he'd even smile. It went on like this for weeks, with our never knowing if today would be a day when Algernon would decide to play, or if he'd leave his hood up and sit next to his teacher, waiting for SAT to be over. Still, any of the SAT teachers gladly took this over the apathy, bad language, or absence that we had come to expect from Algernon. Again, subtle improvements...

One day, things got even better with Algernon. He decided to play a tag game. The SAT teachers had, by this point, stopped even asking him if he wanted to play tag. He did, after all, claim to *only* like basketball. But there he was, asking Marri to play 'Sharks and Minnows,' and actually looking excited when she coolly replied, "Sure. I mean... if you want."

Slowly but surely, Algernon's participation continued to rise. It seemed that each week he added one more SAT game to his repertoire. Turns out he kind of did like 'Frogs and Flies.' And soccer wasn't so bad either. Even 'Man from Mars' was kind of all right. He still won't play four square. And don't even try Ro Sham Bo Relay. But still, we were getting somewhere. In fact, it reached the point by the end of the school year where Algernon no longer protested leaving his classroom to come up for SAT in the first place. He also has some buddies, including both a classmate in the Special Day class and several peers in his old mainstream class, who try and coax him into playing a game every time he decides to sit out. They have about as much success as the SAT teachers and his classroom teacher--- hit or miss, but you can see a smile spread across Algernon's face every time they beg him to play.

What we're struck by the most is that we've seen this kid smile in the last few months more than we've ever seen him smile since we've known him for the last two years. As his teacher told us: "He takes his hood down a lot more now. When the other kids get to play with him, they don't just see Algernon as the kid behind the hood."

When we think about what kind of positive role sports played for so many of us growing up, we're very appreciative that we are able to offer this program to these children. Many don't get it in other places in their lives. It not only offers the students a chance to socialize in a way that is different from standing around at recess (or worse – bullying, rough-housing, etc.); it centers around teamwork, exercise, sportsmanship, and we won't be surprised to hear that it's helped some students gain

enough confidence to try out for a team in middle school. This is something that would not have happened for many of our students without SAT.

Literacy Assistance for Tenderloin Students:

I haven't written about this in past reports, so you may not be aware of the literacy work that BAWCC has been doing with young students at Tenderloin school. Well, we are. *Our Academic Enrichment Program started out a few years ago as a tiny program, and has continued to grow since then.*

After hearing about it in many staff meetings over the years, and being approached by many teachers at the school about problems in this area, it was clear that there were many children at Tenderloin school who desperately needed assistance with reading. Many were below or far-below grade level in their reading (and pre-reading for kindergarteners). The teachers were doing their very best to get all the kids up to grade level, but with so many children needing that kind of assistance, their classroom time just couldn't stretch that far. The part-time literacy staff members were doing their very best as well, but couldn't keep up. It was clear that more resources were needed. At one of the staff meetings, we were directly asked if we could help too. Specifically, BAWCC was asked to target the younger students at the school so that they would be better prepared in the next couple of years for reading challenges.

So... since 2007, BAWCC has provided reading assistance to students at Tenderloin school. Mostly, we target the youngest children because there are so few other resources available to that age group, but when asked by classroom teachers for additional help, our staff works with some of the older students too.

Sahara's Literacy Story:

Anne, one of BAWCC's very gifted literacy staff members at the school, recently told us a story about one of the students she's been working with this year: Sahara. Sahara is a five year old girl who started Kindergarten in December 2009, (three months late). The Tenderloin Community School is her first school experience. Sahara, from an English-speaking home, possessed very low literacy skills when she arrived: no letter or print concepts, and she had a small vocabulary. We discovered that she didn't know words that many children learn in preschool or at home.

Sahara was an eager learner in our first sessions in January. Her vocabulary grew, she could isolate initial sounds of words, and she could write her name. **Then, her attitude changed.**

It was March when she realized that she was far behind her peers. We brought out letter games she had previously enjoyed. She crossed her arms, stared straight ahead and said, "*Letters are dumb. I don't like this. I just want to play.*" She had also refused to participate in a small group with the school's resource specialist, so she had to be dropped from the resource roster so the teacher could work with a student who was

willing to participate. We asked ourselves, “What does Sahara need that our one-on-one literacy program can provide?” What we realized is that we have the time to get to know her as an individual and to use her interests to meet curricular goals.” So, we started:

We asked, “Sahara, could you draw me a picture and tell me about it?” She said, “*Oh yes! Here, I’ll draw you a princess. I love princesses!*” While she is drawing we asked her, “When you say ‘princess’ what’s the first sound you make?” She thought for a while, then said: “*Princess, prin, ccess, pri... ‘P’*”, she said while drawing the princess’s hair. We asked, “What letter do you think makes that sound? Here, let’s look up at our alphabet board.”

Sahara looked up at the alphabet board and started scanning from left to right, from top to bottom, demonstrating some of her new literacy skills. She couldn’t find the letter, but she wasn’t frustrated. We said, “Here’s ‘N’ for ‘nest’ and ‘P’ for ‘pig.’ ‘Princess’ starts with one of these letters. Which one do you think it is?” Sahara stopped drawing. We could see her thinking. She looked at us with a big smile and says, “*P! Princess starts with P!*”

All of a sudden she said, “*I want to write a sentence of my own. I want to write ‘Nayeli is the princess’ and then I want to give her the sentence.*” We were thrilled. We worked on the sentence together. Sahara taped her princess picture to the sentence strip and gave it to Nayeli, her friend.

As a child who arrived in the classroom three months late, Sahara missed the early weeks when friendship patterns were set. She was struggling a bit to fit in. We realized that she could use our time together to build classroom friendships. In the weeks that followed, we worked on letter names and sounds while she wrote her sentences: “*Patricia is my friend and queen.*” “*Sahara got 3 blue post-its.*” “*Happy Birthday to you, Edna. I’d love you to be my friend.*” She made a present for a boy, “*Birthday Box for Marcos.*” In May she made a book of letters as a birthday gift. **Letters were no longer “dumb.”**

By that time, Sahara was coming to us eagerly and didn’t want to leave. During our last session of the school year, she brought the class birthday book. She read the following names with no help: Kerry, Marcos, Cladelyn, Nayeli, Patricia, Edna. She read all the rest of the names with prompting from us and the help of the alphabet board.

Friendship was Sahara’s entry point into literacy.

Just one more “Literacy” Story: I can’t resist putting in this story that one of our BAWCC Librarians told me about “Literacy”! She wrote:

“An interesting thing happened when Maria G. in second grade came out of the bathroom across from the Library. (It’s not unusual that our BAWCC staff members who work in the Library end up being hall & bathroom monitors!)

Maria told me that someone wrote a “bad word” in the bathroom.

*We went in so she could show me where it was, and “fck” was written on one of the stall doors. She said, “But they spelled it wrong – they forgot the “u”.
Now there’s some literacy for you!”*

Tenderloin Family Fair: Our Spring Carnival:

Another specific request that we got from the principal at Tenderloin school (the second year the school was open) was that BAWCC sponsor a spring carnival for the kids and families at the school. *Yes...Absolutely... We’d be happy to take that on!* The Tenderloin Family Fair was born! This happened 8 years ago, and ever since then, every spring, BAWCC has put together a day-long event for hundreds of children and families.

As I past year, we expect more than 300 children and their parents and other community members who came to enjoy the day as well. BAWCC gets about 100 volunteers to staff the event (we want the parents to come and just relax and enjoy their day, a rare occurrence for some of them, I’m sure!). **I think that my favorite part is that most of the kids get books as “prizes” for the games. Most kids leave the Fair with 6-8 books that they can take home and read over the summer!**

We spend the whole year collecting new and like-new books for that day, and our two BAWCC librarians staff the Prize Room (the book side of the Prize Room), so they know the children’s interests and reading levels, and can pick great books for the kids. It really is terrific.

BAWCC’s After-School Clubs:

Since the second year the school was open, BAWCC has offered After-School Clubs for the students at Tenderloin Community School. This has been a big success for the students at Tenderloin school, and it’s a structure that has exposed the children to program areas that, in many cases, they would never have contact with if they were not in these After-School Clubs.

This year we had more After-School Clubs, by far, than I ever anticipated that we would have when we set up this program in the early years that Tenderloin Community School existed. ***This program all started with a hallway conversation in which one of our 5th grade teachers was talking about how very hard it is for some of our Tenderloin students to do well in school since they have parents who, for a variety of reasons, are not able to provide much (if any) homework help at home.*** Our after-school clubs span many academic (homework help), art, and physical activity areas, and they all evolved from that one hallway conversation.

Library Program at Tenderloin School:

BAWCC’s staff set up the library at the school and has continued to staff the program since the school opened. All 380 k-5th grade students at the school have a weekly library class. We have two library staff members, one from BAWCC and one from the school district; and we have built our book collection to more than 13,000 books (most of them supplied through BAWCC donors!) All of the books have been hand-

chosen for our extremely diverse student population. Julie, BAWCC's wonderfully gifted librarian, works all summer to make sure that all of the important "infrastructure" work gets done so there is time during the school year to concentrate on the classes. The Tenderloin School's Library is one of my favorite places... anywhere! The architects started by making it a gorgeous space, with a long curved wall, and windows for light all around, and our library staff took it from there! It's magical!
(No wonder the SF Unified School district uses it so often for meetings!!)

The Garden Program & Technology Program at Tenderloin School:

In my last report, I wrote a long section on the **Garden Program**, so I will save another detailed update on that program for the next time. Knowledge of and access to nature is something that many of our Tenderloin kids have in very short supply! We love being able to expose them to a little bit of this part of the world.

Our **Computer Center/Technology Program** shifted this year to include BAWCC's coordinator's working with new technology that (due to a couple of wonderful donations) we're able to provide to each of the classrooms, iPads. Through our Tech Program, we work with all 380 students at the school. This program is continually tied to the classroom curriculum and is, of course, absolutely essential to help prepare the students for the next steps that they will be taking when they move on to middle school. I will write more about this program in the next report, but it is our exciting new initiative at the school!

As I mentioned earlier in the report, Nancy and I, the real "old timers" here at BAWCC, have been asked the same question many times over the years ...

Aren't you afraid to be working in the Tenderloin?

I just turned to Nancy and asked her if people still ask her that question, because I still get asked that every once in a while when people first learn that I work in the Tenderloin. Nancy said "Some of my friends still can't believe that I work here". **Just last week, though, I was with Nancy when she was asked why she has worked with BAWCC for such a long time**, and she started talking about how gratifying it is to be doing this kind of work... and to be able to see the results of what we have been able to do over the years. I loved listening to what she had to say!

I'm not saying that it's always been easy... or that we haven't had some "dicey" moments or even periods of time, because we have. There have been times when we had to call 911 about something that was happening in the Center, but my hunch is that we all made a decision many years ago that we couldn't do this work if we allowed ourselves to be the least bit scared of where we were and what we were doing. I know that I did. I'll tell you one story, though, that did seem like a little bit "much" to me... It happened a number of years ago.

It happened on a day that the Center was open for our drop-in Clothes Closet. A woman came up to the door and yelled in through our pretty little hand-built screen door

that she wanted clothing...now! The services had closed a couple of hours earlier, so I walked over to the door and told her that we were closed for the day, I pointed out our hours that were posted, and told her that she could come back in the morning for clothing. No... that wasn't good enough. After yelling some more, she broke the screen door and barged her way into the office. She yelled again that she wanted clothing!

Now, we do "break the rules" all the time if we feel that a woman or child needs a pair of shoes, or a warm coat, or a pair of pants and it's not a time that the Center is open. This was NOT one of those times... it was clearly a power struggle ... and she was clearly high. I knew that if I "gave in" at this point that the "word" would go out on the street that you just had to bully the staff of the women's center and you'd get what you wanted... plus,--- it was just ... wrong. There she was, though, and we were pretty much nose-to-nose, but I told her again that she would have to come back when the Center was open. By that point, we were back in the corner of the front room where my desk was, and beside my desk was a file cabinet. She slapped the side of my head, and my head went banging into the file cabinet.

Some more context – there were two other people in the Center when this all happened. Two men who worked at another non-profit in the Tenderloin were there getting some statistical information that BAWCC had collected on the kids in the Tenderloin, and I think they were so stunned by what had happened so quickly that they really didn't know what to do (and they were probably pretty scared too, is my guess). However, after my head went banging into the file cabinet one of the men called 911.

The woman left pretty quickly after that. I think it was for two reasons. One is, I think she scared herself by what she had done, and, I think she knew the police would be there soon. If it had ended there, I wouldn't have told you this story, but it didn't, and this is the part that was one of my least favorite times in my years at the Center. She started stalking me. It wasn't too hard to do that. I had moved into the Tenderloin when I decided to co-found BAWCC, and I lived up on O'Farrell, just two blocks from the Center. Prior to this incident, I always came and went as I pleased, no matter what time of day or night. For a brief period, though, I was pretty scared just going back & forth from home to work. That lasted for a few weeks, then it changed. The woman "disappeared".

*I didn't see the woman again for months --- then one day, there she was, outside our Center's large window staring at me. She crooked her finger, and motioned for me to come outside. **Something in me just snapped, I think.** When she had been stalking me, I had lived scared, then that dissipated when she disappeared, and in that moment when I saw her again, I just thought "No, I am not going to do this any more! I'm done!" I slammed down the paper I was working on at my desk, and pretty much stomped outside, and went right up to her. The only thing that I remember thinking was "I will NOT live that scared again. If she's going to wipe up the sidewalk with me, let's just get it over with!!"*

I think that my response was the last thing that she expected. She seemed to deflate right in front of me. She didn't talk for a minute, then she said, "I've been in jail. You had me arrested." I said "No. I didn't have you arrested. I didn't press charges.

Someone else had you arrested if you went to jail.” She said “Yeh. It was probably the people at SF General for what I did there.” I didn’t ask... Then she asked, “Can I come back in for services here. I really need them.” I said “You got violent with our staff.” (I didn’t say ‘me’... we both knew that.) She said something like, “I know. I’m sorry. Can I come back?” I thought about it for a while, and said “You can come back in six months... IF, you keep it together between now and then, AND if you ever step the least bit out of line with us, you’re out for good”. She said, “I know. I won’t”.

We did see this woman again. And, she did come in for services again months later, but there was never anything else that happened with her, and eventually we never saw her in the neighborhood again.

BAWCC’s Tenderloin NETWORK of Children, Youth & Family Services:

26 years ago, BAWCC took on organizing a monthly meeting for all of the folks working with Tenderloin children, youth, and families: The Tenderloin NETWORK... Everyone was invited. Everyone was included. When we started this, of course, there were fewer resources and organizations, but all of these years later, our Network is still going strong! We have up to 35 people coming to our meetings in any given month, representing almost as many different organizations and City departments. This is SO helpful to our community’s children and families--- having us working together! In fact, the City has used Network as a model on several occasions for setting up community-wide groups on a variety of issues.

Our “formula” is simple. We rotate where the meetings are held so that we are continually visiting each other’s organizations’ programs and sites. We have a straightforward agenda that includes time for all of the staff to share their information, and we always have interesting outside speakers who are working in our areas of concern. We start on time. We leave on time. We laugh a lot, and as of a couple of years ago, we bring Vietnamese sandwiches for each of the attendees. We keep the tone of the meetings collaborative and cooperative, and it really works! *(Actually, I’ve chaired these meetings since the beginning and have never missed one in all these years.)* I can’t tell you the number of times I’ve been told over the years how helpful and effective the Network is, or how many times I’ve been told that our simple process was replicated in other communities. I love to hear it.... It’s connecting people... !

What Dennis Is Doing Now...

I know that some of you will remember Dennis and his sister Nina, but for those of you who are new to our updates, Dennis and Nina grew up in the Tenderloin. They lived for many years with their parents in a studio apartment just a couple of blocks from both our Center and the School. I wrote about their getting involved in the Ice Skating Program through our Youth Sports Initiative, and how they just took off in that

program. That is not surprising if you know either of these kids, or their parents. They are hard-working, smart, delightful kids with parents who are supportive every step of the way despite many challenges that they've faced as a family.

Both Dennis & Nina came through so many BAWCC programs over the years. They played in the Civic Center Playgrounds and the Tenderloin Recreation Center that BAWCC worked to get built. Their mother got clothing for them from our Clothes Closet. They both attended Tenderloin Community School that BAWCC got built, and they participated in the Library Program, Computer Center Program, got free dental work through our Dental Clinic, joined our After-School Cooking and Vietnamese Clubs, and they got involved in various sports programs such as our Bowling League, and most notably our Ice Skating Program. *(That's what I wrote about in 2005... how Dennis and Nina worked their way up the Olympic Track skating levels, and ended up winning many gold medals at national skating competitions, including Dennis' being chosen to present flowers to Sasha Cohen in LA, & their getting a skating scholarship from Brian Boitano.)*

Now fast-forward to a few months ago...another of our passions is creating effective partnerships. Some of these over the years have been with high schools, including one this past couple of years with Kate, a department chair, at Lick Wilmerding. One day, when Kate and I were talking about preparing for the community services program at Tenderloin school w/ BAWCC & Lick, Kate started talking about one of her gifted students. You guessed it... Dennis! She was talking about how hard working and creative he is, and how he wanted to be an architect, and we were both thinking about how great it was that Dennis was going to be doing his "service learning" work with BAWCC at Tenderloin school, where he went when he was young... AND, that through the program we were setting up, he was going to meet Jennifer, the lead architect w/ EHDD who designed Tenderloin school! **This gave me another idea!**

That night, I called Jennifer at home (she is on our BAWCC Advisory Board, and we've stayed in contact over the years), and I told her about Dennis and asked if they ever had high school students do internships during the summer. She sounded interested, and proceeded to set up a summer opportunity for Dennis at EHDD Architecture.

I didn't know it at the time I asked Jennifer about this, but EHDD has not had high school interns before. (Sometimes, it's better not to know!) I went to visit Dennis at EHDD a few weeks ago and spent some time with his supervisor there. He is doing so well! They are very appreciative of his work, and he is really enjoying and learning so much from this experience. And, how neat is that to have a student who went to their school working for their architectural firm! A win-win for sure!

Last year, one of my favorite funders asked me if there have ever been things we've done at BAWCC that didn't work. I said "Of course!", and I proceeded to write her a report of our "trials and errors" ... and things that didn't work the first or even second time we tried them.... In my 2001 Progress Report, I wrote this quotation that I still love. It was from **Winston Churchill: "going from defeat to defeat with unbridled enthusiasm!"**

Luckily (and with years of hard work, and many dedicated people inside and outside of our organization working together in the same direction), every big, long-term project that BAWCC took on has been successful... the five playgrounds, the school, the recreation center, the youth sports initiative, etc. We are not in the least afraid, though, of trying something new that might or might not work. We're not afraid of trying it again even if it didn't work well the first time. Some of our best lessons have been learned that way.

Finally, I have one more quotation that I love, and I think of as a cornerstone of all of BAWCC's work. It goes something like this **"The true measure of a person is how they treat someone who can do NOTHING for them in return!"** When I saw that quotation years ago, I didn't write it down. I should have. (In fact, if any of you knows who said it, or has the exact quotation, I'd love to get that.) That is, in my opinion, one of BAWCC's most important approaches to **everything** we do. I sincerely hope that we treat every person who comes through our door... or participates in any one of our programs, with the same respect and kindness that we would give to our largest donor.

Well... that's it for now. I hope you've enjoyed hearing more about BAWCC and where we've been, and our wonderfully interesting Tenderloin neighborhood.

Warmest Regards,

Midge Wilson

Midge Wilson, Executive Director