MINIMUM SUGGESTED DONATION TWO DOLLARS.

SHELTER WAITLIST UPDATE:

As of May 15th there are 1,063 people on the shelter waitlist in San Francisco.

SF STREETS HIT WITH SWEEPS

Last Month, Mayor Mark Farrell announced a new crackdown on unhoused people seeking shelter. Mayor Farrell declared, “The tents are a public safety hazard for the people living in them, and for the residents of San Francisco”.

Absent from this crackdown are any sensible solutions to the issues afflicting our city’s poorest residents. These crackdowns are nothing new; mayor after mayor has felt the need to push this false “tough love” doctrine and Farrell is no different. The mayor confidently stated during his announcement, “We have moved as a city from a position of compassion to enabling (unacceptable) street behavior, and as mayor I don’t stand for that.”

However, none of these efforts have made a difference in decreasing the visibility of homeless people or have they changed “street behavior”.

Image description: Mayor Mark Farrell, Homeless Department Director Jeff Kositsky, and DPW Director Mohammed Nuru sit atop a monster wearing a police hat that seems to be plucking people out of tents and stomping on an encampments.

Seattle has proposed a tax to raise money to fight homelessness that would be levied against companies making at least $20 million annually in gross revenues. Amazon, which is headquartered in Seattle, has ceased construction of a new office building in retaliation.

L.A. Budgets $430 Million to Help Homeless, Most of It Long-Term Debt (LA Times)

In Los Angeles, a new $20 million program will fund 50 to 100 shelter beds in each of the city’s 15 districts. This move is part of a larger budget program that will allocate money for housing, healthcare, and outreach for homeless communities.

In 83 Million Eviction Records, a Sweeping and Intimate New Look at Housing in America (New York Times)

In the 900,000 eviction judgements reviewed, landlords were allowed to evict 1 in 50 renters. The highest eviction rates were concentrated in poorer areas with low minimum wages.

America’s Housing Crisis is Spreading to Smaller Cities (Huffington Post)

The number of homeless children in Boise is currently twice as much as it was in 2005. HUD vouchers, recalculated every year, can’t keep up with landlords who raise rents every 60 days.

Newark, NJ Wants to Guarantee a Free Lawyer for Low-Income Residents Facing Eviction (NJ.com)

Newark is following in the footsteps of New York City in providing legal representation for renters facing eviction. Currently, 9 out of 10 tenants undergoing eviction proceedings don’t have representation.

De Blasio Administration Endorses 4 Supervised Injection Facilities, Provides No Timeline (Politico)

New York City could be the first city in the United States to open safe injection sites. The four sites would be in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the Bronx, and would be part of a year-long pilot program.

Got a question about life in shelter or on the streets? Ask Hollie, a brand new advice columnist with the Street Sheet Street Paper.

Why is it so difficult to get into a shelter? How do you use the bathroom if you’re homeless? Where can I get free tampons? Hollie has the answers to these questions and more!

Stay tuned for Hollie’s first column, coming out in this very paper. Send your own questions to holliehomeless@cohsf.org
In the age of such movements as “MeToo” and “Times Up,” we have seen a shift in the national discourse around sexual violence. However, even with the forward progress of these movements there is still one population that has been largely ignored and distanced from the mainstream narrative. Homeless individuals, particularly homeless women, are one of the most vulnerable populations when it comes to sexual harm, yet their stories are largely ignored. It is important that as a society we start to center these stories and take a look at the prevalence of violence experienced by individuals who are homeless. While I focus on homeless women in this article, specifically sexual violence against those who identify as women, it is important to note that men living on the street are also at high risk of violence. It has been estimated that 14% to 21% of individuals who are homeless have experienced violence personally, and one-third of the homeless population has witnessed an attack on another homeless person. This is in comparison to the approximately 2% of the general population who have reported experiencing a violent crime.

With that in mind, homeless women are even more vulnerable to violence than their male counterparts. We lack the exact statistics of the prevalence of sexual violence among homeless women, however, in one study of homeless shelter residents in New York, it was found that homeless women were 106 times more likely to experience sexual assault than poor women who were housed. In San Francisco, there is a need for additional research to get an accurate look on the exact percentage of homeless women who experience sexual harm; however, most service providers can agree that the number is high. It is also important to note that while rates of sexual violence are high for homeless women across the board, homeless women of color, transgender women, queer women, immigrant women, and disabled women are at even higher risk of sexual harm. San Francisco SafeHouse has been serving homeless women for over twenty years, and in that time we have found that in addition to sexual exploitation the women we serve have experienced high rates of sexual assault, sexual harassment, intimate partner violence, stalking, and hate crimes. These women raise their voices on a daily basis, yet their stories are ignored or discarded. So while it is important that women across the country are speaking out against sexual assault and sexual harassment, it is imperative that we start to listen when homeless women say #MeToo.

But what Mayor Farrell conveniently leaves out is the insufficiency of the services that are being offered and the gravity of the plight of those on the streets. On April 25th at 5am, the Coalition on Homelessness witnessed a sweep carried out by the Department of Public Works and SFPD. The Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) was present and offering residents seven days on a mat on the floor of the nearby Next Door Shelter. Residents would be ejected after a week and were not allowed to bring the bulk of their property with them. Additionally, the city was only able to provide mats for a third of unhoused people in the area. In the end only eight people were sheltered in that space, the majority were simply shuffled into surrounding neighborhoods.

During the April 25th sweeps, the Coalition could find no notices warning of the removal of tents. Nor was there any evidence of a warning of the removal of tents. Flyers given to some in the area publicized the additional area publicized the additional space (a congregate living space with restriction on personal property) was left out and no transportation was provided. Seven days on a mat on the floor is not an adequate response to homelessness. Farrell’s toxic statements also hide that the great majority of the “resistant population” suffer from serious mental health issues and that for these demographics, a group living environment is not possible.

Farrell hopes to paint vulnerable people in crisis as lawbreakers who must be swept away like refuse rather than offered assistance. With over a thousand people waiting to get into a shelter at the time of this publica- tion, there are not adequate resources within our current system. Why are unhoused people expected to accept inadequate resources and then face criminalization when unable to abide by unrealistic standards?

Furthermore, these sweeps only aggravate the deep issues experienced by folks on the street, being displaced with no alternative, often at the cost of whatever valuables you can carry, is a violent and traumatic experience. People can and often do lose precious survival gear, blankets, jackets, identification, and memorabilia and have to start over from literally nothing in some cases as one can lose everything in a sweep without proper resources. One well known San Francisco artist Ronnie Goodman, lost his irreplaceable archive wood blocks and lino cut sheets in the sweep, while another homeless women was sliced after police cut her tent with her inside.

The lack of permanent housing or even dignified alternatives to camping damages the trust between unhoused people and local government and makes it tremendously more difficult to connect folks with what scant resources actually are available.

For Mayor Farrell, just existing outside in poverty is something he will not stand for. Farrell elaborates his reasoning by claiming, “We have offered services time and time again and gotten many off the street, but there is a resistant population that remains, and their tents have to go.”

In contrast to this perspective, TONI EBY, OUTREACH & TRAINING MANAGER AT SAN FRANCISCO SAFEHOUSE, stated, “During the April 25th sweeps, the Coalition could find no notices warning of the removal of tents. Nor was there any evidence of a warning of the removal of tents. Flyers given to some in the area publicized the additional space (a congregate living space with restriction on personal property) was left out and no transportation was provided. Seven days on a mat on the floor is not an adequate response to homelessness. Farrell’s toxic statements also hide that the great majority of the “resistant population” suffer from serious mental health issues and that for these demographics, a group living environment is not possible.”

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I work seven days a week. I barely get by. I have no health insurance. I didn’t bother paying income taxes last year. For many of us, life inside America’s broken economic system is slavery. If that term seems exaggerated to you I’d venture to guess you haven’t been where I’ve been.

My two young children live with me three nights a week in a residential hotel in a high crime area in San Francisco. We occupy 180 square feet of space and share a toilet and shower with other occupants of the building. Yet, my children’s other home is a spacious apartment inside a Victorian mansion in Lower Pacific Heights owned by my ex-wife’s parents. Poverty, in all its forms, is highly complicated. Lack of affordable housing, the decades-long stagnation in earnings for the American worker as well as my own choices have led me to where I am at today.

Before living at the SRO I was without a home. Unhoused. Homeless. I refused to leave the city without a home. Unhoused. Homeless. I couch surfed. I slept in my car. I used my old key to access the side passageway of my former apartment in San Francisco’s Lower Pacific Heights. I opened the trap door and make my way down. It’s about 4:30 a.m. The birds woke me up. Dire warnings to back off claimed territory. My territory is a Prius. I am grounded behind the wheel for most of my time here on earth. I am barely a man. Just an entity who gives rides, drinks coffee, and pays bills.

That morning I received a text with some good news that made me feel anxious and defeated. I’ve been on the waiting list at a homeless shelter, a mere nine blocks from my former apartment in San Francisco’s Lower Pacific Heights. Four hundred people were ahead of me when I got on the list over two months ago. The text is from the city letting me know my number has come up, and if I don’t check in by 4:30 p.m., I lose my bed.

Around 2 p.m. I leave my car parked in Low Pac Heights. Parking near the shelter is mostly metered. My residential sticker is still good, and I pause to acknowledge this small victory. I walk a few blocks and cross Van Ness Avenue, the north-south thoroughfare that runs from Market Street to the Bay. Once across Van Ness, I am in the Polk Gulch, which runs along the edge of Russian Hill and Nob Hill, two upper crust neighborhoods. The shelter borders the Tenderloin and the Polk Gulch. The Tenderloin, also known as the TL or the 5’s, is a neighborhood with high crime and heavy drug use, though there are many positive community services there: renovated playgrounds, a local art revival scene, soup kitchens, outpatient clinics with free or low-cost acupuncture and chair massage, a writing and tutoring program for under-resourced students. These gems situated among the underprivileged community give the neighborhood a sense of pride and hope.

A dead-end alley that once stored dumpsters and attracted dumpster divers is now home to the Tenderloin National Forest. The Tenderloin National Forest, or TNF, has about a dozen mature trees, including a redwood, and provides a safe, healthy spot for residents of this gritty section of the city. The urban forest is surrounded by residential buildings and hotels that house homeless youth with mental health issues, low-income seniors, and other disenfranchised populations.

I delay checking in at the shelter by going to the convenience store. I pour myself a cup of coffee and relax. I know from experience the warm, comforting feeling of new socks on cold, lonely feet.

Now, over ten years later, the same Middle-Eastern guy is behind the counter at the coffee shop. A little heavier, hair and beard beginning to grey, but stillgregarious and wearing the same type of get-up—a sky blue Adidas track and field outfit. He is telling a hard-looking woman his uncle won’t let him do credit on alcohol anymore. “Sorry, Mama, new rules from the boss.”

I pour myself a cup of coffee and bring it to the counter. “ Yep, that’ll do it.” I give him two bucks. He gives me fifty cents change. I smile. “Nice to see not everyone has raised their prices.”

“Best deal in the Loin.”

“Cheers!”

I walk up the block and see the shelter residents across the street smoking and congregating in front of the building. I lag again and Google my soon-to-be resting place. The shelter is run by Episcopal Community Services. Breakfast and dinner is served. Un-housed adults can access case management and mental health services. I make a mental note to inquire about case management, hoping they can help me land permanent housing. I read about their sister shelter, The Sanctuary. The website reads: "Many of those who stay at Next Door are addressing substance abuse problems, and some are coping with mental health issues and chronic medical conditions." They forgot working class adults who can no longer afford rent in San Francisco.”

Whatever sanctuary I can find will have to come from within myself.

This is Part 1 of this piece. For more from Andrew Dertien you can visit his blog at https://sfsrofamilies.wordpress.com/
Many of us honored our mothers this past Mother’s Day by acknowledging the sacrifices they made raising us, how much work they put in to ensure that their children had the best lives possible. Mothers of homeless children feel a special pain worrying that their children will not flourish. In the daily struggle to survive, motherhood requires strength and bravery that those who live inside cannot begin to imagine.

In light of an astonishing upswing in the number of homeless children experiencing homelessness, the Coalition on Homelessness, along with homeless parent members, gathered on the steps of City Hall to demand housing and shelter on May 30th, which is Mother’s Day in Mexico. In San Francisco, 1 in 25 SFUSD children are experiencing homelessness and they have had enough.

San Francisco is at a critical juncture, where financial pressures are pushing low-income and impoverished San Franciscans out of their homes and communities. As rents are skyrocket more and more families are at risk of homelessness. San Francisco has an estimated 3,300 homeless children in San Francisco, based on SFUSD data.

“I am a homeless mother and I am tired” said Patricia Alonzo. “It’s affecting my children—they going to school and not being able to focus on just school, they’re focused on moving, and on having a place to call home.”

Homeless children have lower academic achievement overall, and less than half met state proficiency standards last fiscal year. In addition, over half are held back for one grade – 25% for multiple grades. Homeless youth are also 87% more likely to drop out of school.

The group gathered in front of city hall and demanded that the Mayor fund an infusion of $14.8 million in new and base-line funding for each FY 2018-19 and $15.7 million in FY 2019-20 to assist an additional 2,500 homeless people and households. This budget proposal attempts to both prevent homelessness and create exits out of homelessness through almost 300 new housing subsidies, while ensuring an adequate emergency services system for those forced to remain on the streets.

After the protest, the group went inside to visit elected officials. Their first stop was the Mayor’s office. Instead of welcoming the families and their children, the Mayor’s office quickly locked the doors all the way down the hallway so no one could enter. They didn’t even bother to send out a representative.

At the different Supervisor’s offices, many offices sent out Legislative Aides, but some did not even bother to do that. Overall the spirit of the action was upbeat, after homeless leaders stepped up and spoke directly to power, they were never discouraged but buoyed to fight for more housing.

One young man, named Daniel, spoke about how he is suffering with his mother in a place with no bathroom. Another young woman, named Carien spoke about how wrong it is that the Bayview does not have a full service shelter, and how challenging the lack of adequate bathrooms were in her own shelter.
Army veteran Bill Bruick spent his last night homeless lying on a tiny patch of dirt, now festooned with a pink flowering shrub behind a Food 4 Less grocery store in Riverside.

“There were no bushes,” Bruick said, pointing to the exact spot still remembering the lump in the ground. “I slept right here. I liked it because nobody could really see me back here. Nobody ever parked back here. I got lucky you know.”

That night in 2013 capped 10 years of living outside a shopping center for the 51-year-old Bruick who resembles a young Charlton Heston.

“Those are around 40,000 homeless veterans in the United States, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. More than 11,000 of them live in California. The state has seen a 17 percent rise in homeless vets since 2016.

The city of Riverside is the only city in California to end veteran homelessness, according to the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. It is one of 62 communities in 32 states to do so.

Many homeless vets suffer from substance abuse and mental illness. Bruick said depression and alcoholism had hobbled him since leaving the Army in 1996. He filled his days drinking beer and vodka. He started early.

“As soon as the liquor store opened at 6 a.m.,” Bruick said. “I’d pass out during the day. Normally, around midnight, I’d stop. Even when I was sick, I’d still force alcohol down me because I would be shaking real bad.”

Seven stints of rehab did nothing for Bruick. But one bout of alcohol poisoning and a letter from his two daughters in Germany expressing a desire to visit inspired change.

“I was like, “Wow, I’ve got to do something,”’ Bruick said. “I don’t want them seeing me in this state.”

Around the same time, Riverside was in the midst of embracing then-President Barack Obama’s push to the country’s mayors to end veteran homelessness.

“As a veteran myself, it was easy to for me to accept that challenge,” said Riverside Mayor Rusty Bailey.

He had also seen his two family friends’ anguished descent into homelessness. And he said when he was in the ninth grade, his church would feed the homeless on Sunday nights.

“I walked in one night, I’m pass- ing out food, taking a tray and there’s a classmate of mine, you could see...,” said Bailey as he choked up recalling the encounter. “Sorry I get so emotion al about this. It’s personal.”

Bailey said he wanted the city’s outreach workers to get personal with homeless vets, by knowing their names and repeated visits, sometimes as many as 50. Then came offers of a place to live. It is an approach called Housing First. The idea is to get vets off the street or out of shelters and into permanent housing before addressing substance abuse or mental health issues.

“We have the success stories to prove that Housing First is the right policy for ending homelessness,” Bailey said.

Through the project, veterans had access to VA housing vouchers. But Bailey still had to convince apartment owners to rent to people coming off the streets.

“I pounded on the table and said it’s inexusable to have veterans in our city who don’t have homes,” Bailey said. “Landlords, where are you at? And many of them stepped up.”

Once they got a place to live, vets were paired up with social services, from mental health to substance abuse to job training.

By the end of 2016, Riverside had housed all 89 of its vets. The city’s share of the feat was $348,000.

Bruick was one of the Riverside program’s early beneficiaries. He went to rehab for the eighth time. Today, he lives in a one-bedroom apartment in Riverside with his fiancee.

And he works at a facility that houses vets until they’re placed in permanent homes.

“I love it,” Bruick said. “I can explain to them what my situation was. I say I was like you. I had nothing. Now I have a car and a place to live. A lot of the vets have had a hard time on the streets and they don’t trust anyone and we have to get them to trust us. Mayor Bailey is now applying what the city learned through housing veterans to Riverside’s 400 chronically homeless people. The Riverside City Council backed a plan in March that would place them in housing before offering them social services.

“I see what we’ve done and I’m proud of that,” Bailey said. “But I also see what we need to do and that worries me because it’s easy to support veterans. It’s hard to support ex-cons or the mentally ill individuals or substance abusers shooting up in the parking lot.”

Another challenge is the chronically homeless also do not have access to the same well-financed federal housing vouchers and social services as veterans.

But Gordon Walker, who heads San Diego’s Regional Task Force on the Homeless, is still optimistic.

“Once you have the political will, the money tends to appear,” Walker said.

He is not involved in the Riverside program but he believes it could show the way forward for other California cities like Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco.

“Those cities are some of the rich est in the country,” Walker said. “It’s how the money is committed and how the citizens want their cities to be.”

Or as Bruick said, it is about cities having faith in all of their citizens.

Bruick has been sober now for 5 years. He has still not seen his daugh ters. But he is hoping for a visit with them and his five grandchildren this summer.

The California Dream series is a statewide media collaboration of CALm atters, KPBS, KPCC, KQED and Capital Public Radio with support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the James Irvine Foundation.
International Workers Day kicked off in Santa Rosa behind the Dollar Tree store which had been home to 40 homeless campers until a massive eviction hit two weeks prior. The camp had originally been a sanctioned campsite, but had swelled since horrific fires forced many from their homes and former camps.

Several hundred demonstrators gathered to show their solidarity with homeless campers before marching to the Hilton behind the Dollar Tree store. The march then continued on to Santa Rosa City Hall, where the official rally concluded. An announcement was made that people were demonstrating.

The march continued on to Santa Rosa City Hall, where demonstrators held the space for nearly an hour before police began to arrive. The cops issued a dispersal order then moved in to arrest those who remained, pulling people apart and dragging one protestor by their hair. Police then cleared the halls, arresting an elderly woman who refused to leave. Six people were arrested, including one person who was taken out on a stretcher after being injured in the altercation with police.

“Workers struggle has no borders,” said Jordan Torres, a demonstrator and union activist.

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“Workers struggle has no borders.”
I see them sitting at the food court, the donut shop, the American café. They are alone with their canvas bags and their dust-colored clothes. They have little packets of sugar and stacks of napkins on their tables. They wander around sometimes, and when they think no one’s watching, they pick up food that’s left behind. There’s an old man I see reading newspapers at the bus stop everyday. He likes to mutter to himself while nibbling on something crumbly wrapped in foil. Today he wasn’t there. He must have lost his feathers.

**UNDERNEATH THE OVERPASS**

There’s something wooden that looks like a small house. Next to it are large black garbage bags filled with clothes and shopping carts. There are tents, pit bulls, and the musty smell of fromage. The sky is gray. It’s been raining and there are a lot more of them today—tents, dogs, drop-shouldered men, with old coats and dreads, walking together, doing the scoot along thing. A man on a bicycle appears and wanders off with a bearded guy. The dogs start to bark. Two men call out to one another from inside the tents.

“I ain’t got no teeth!”

“Me neither!”

**NAME:** Joshua Andrew Donohoe

**PLACE:** 13th Street just west of Folsum, San Francisco

**TIME WITHOUT A HOME:** Just over 4 years

**AGE:** 28

**WHAT DOES HOME MEAN?** Where the heart is. Wherever you are willing and feel comfortable enough to lay your head or relax a little bit, take the backpack off, set-up a tent and chill for a minute. Even if it’s for 5 minutes and you get roused right after that – anywhere you want it to be really.

**WILL YOU EVER GO BACK TO LIVING INSIDE?** Yes and no. If there’s a way to incorporate both (living inside and out) I would do it in a heart beat. I like the Navigation idea except that it’s way too much like jail, and they try to regulate too much. They’re wardens. That completely takes away the whole freedom aspect of being out here, the independence. If SROs didn’t cost 80 bucks a night and were bigger than an SRO, it’d be interesting.

**WHAT DOES FAMILY MEAN TO YOU?** To me if I’m a family member to let’s say people who are not part of my blood family I do my best to help them out, to drop everything, whatever I’m doing because I know I’m going to choose family members who would do the same for me. I don’t ask too much from people. People are going through their own shit, everybody has a hard story. Right now, something is pushing them, or leading them, to do something. If you’re going to choose family members, then you should really love them and help them. You should want to see them succeed. I see them sitting at the food court, the donut shop, the American café. They are alone with their canvas bags and their dust-colored clothes. They have little packets of sugar and stacks of napkins on their tables. They wander around sometimes, and when they think no one’s watching, they pick up food that’s left behind. There’s an old man I see reading newspapers at the bus stop everyday. He likes to mutter to himself while nibbling on something crumbly wrapped in foil. Today he wasn’t there. He must have lost his feathers.