How You Are Saving Lives with Community Organizing

Debra Copes, TNDC resident and Community Organizing Outreach Leader, walks around the Tenderloin posting meeting flyers and registering people to vote.

When Debra Copes found TNDC’s Community Organizing team, she found people who respected her and believed in her voice. That encouragement was life changing.

Debra’s story began with a conversation with her neighbor, Sharon Hewitt. She encouraged Debra to sign up for TNDC’s Leadership Academy. After twelve weeks of working on campaigns to improve the Tenderloin, Debra felt confident to continue organizing.

Now, she works at TNDC as a Community Organizing Outreach Leader. Knocking on doors, registering neighbors to vote, posting flyers, and most recently, forming a Black Rights Association in the Tenderloin.

Thank You from Don

“I look at the Tenderloin as a gateway for people trying to pick their lives up, for people trying to work through problems. We try to make the Tenderloin a good gateway, as good as we can make it.”

—Brother Kelly Cullen, Former Executive Director of TNDC

Your generosity makes it possible for Community Organizing to empower Tenderloin residents. Thank you.

A resident of Curran House, Debra first found the Community Organizing team through her neighbor, Sharon Hewitt. She encouraged Debra to sign up for TNDC’s Leadership Academy. After twelve weeks of working on campaigns to improve the Tenderloin, Debra felt confident to continue organizing.

The power is in their hands and that power is life changing.

Thank you for creating a gateway for people to change their lives.

With gratitude,

Donald S. Falk, CEO

“I know what it’s like to find my voice,” shared Genay Markham, Community Organizer at TNDC and member of the association, “so I love helping other people do the same thing.”

Your support is critical to helping people find their voice and becoming neighborhood leaders.

“Debra is excited for the association’s first Juneteenth Celebration. The celebration takes place on Tuesday, 6/19 at Kelly Cullen Community (220 Golden Gate Avenue) from 5-7 PM. All are welcome to join.”

“Don’t think my life would have been much if I hadn’t gotten into organizing,” said Debra. “I believe and know they saved my life.”

For more of Debra’s story, visit: tndc.org/tenderloin-voices
Building a Healthier Tenderloin

“The [corner stores] are community pillars. We want to make sure that they are a vital community resource for the people who live here.”

—Jennifer Siswandi, Food Justice Leader for TNDC’s Tenderloin Healthy Corner Store Coalition

Born and raised in the Tenderloin, Jennifer has seen the neighborhood’s lack of healthy options firsthand, but she has also made change by working with the Tenderloin Healthy Corner Store Coalition (TLHCSC). The TLHCSC works with local corner stores to offer more produce and less foods with preservatives. So far, the TLHCSC has redesigned five stores and a sixth is on the way!

Engaging the Neighborhood

“The results that I see [through Community Organizing] are tangible.”

—Rebecca Browning, Community Organizer and Resident at TNDC

To find out what the community wants, all you have to do is ask, says Rebecca. One of the ways Community Organizing creates opportunities for neighborhood dialogue is by hosting the Better Lower Eddy Street outreach pop-up, which happens every first Friday of the month on the corner of Eddy and Taylor Street.

Empowering Tenderloin Residents

“Every day I get to impact the lives of people in a positive way. It makes my day. Every day.”

—Ramon Quintero, Community Organizer at TNDC

At TNDC, education means having a constant conversation. Ramon facilitates a drop-in Ethnic Studies Class every year and a year-round Land Use Class that runs twice a month.

Championing Neighborhood Leaders

“I don’t think my life would have been much if I hadn’t gotten into organizing. I believe and know they saved my life.”

—Debra Copes, Graduate of TNDC’s Leadership Academy

For Debra, TNDC’s Leadership Academy was just the beginning. After 12 weeks of practicing public speaking, learning conflict resolution techniques, and facilitating group meetings, Debra continued to grow as a leader. At 60 years old, she goes door to door registering voters, posts flyers for community meetings, and works as a Community Organizing Outreach Leader at TNDC.

Mobilizing the Neighborhood

“Organizing is interpersonal relationships. You have to build community with the people you work with.”

—Lorenzo Listana, Community Organizer at TNDC

Organizers bring people together. Lorenzo founded the first Filipino Community Association in the Tenderloin, and regularly organizes the Tenderloin People’s Congress, an alliance of 12 organizations.

Transforming Lives in the Tenderloin

“We give people back purpose, meaning, hope.”

—Curtis Bradford, TNDC Donor, Resident, Board Member, and Community Organizer

Curtis describes Community Organizing with one word: transformative. His transformation happened seven years ago when one of our Community Organizers approached him at a community meeting at his home, the Alexander Residence. Through the team’s support, he learned to move beyond his past and define his identity for himself. He felt stronger, empowered, and confident enough to join TNDC’s Board and become a full-time advocate for the Tenderloin.

Voices of the Tenderloin

Your generosity creates opportunities for people to find and use their voice. See some of the stories you made possible!