



It has been a long journey for me. Back in 1982, I had 2 months more at Mercy High School to graduate. At that time, I had just turned 18 years old and didn't think of the consequences of cutting classes. I was eighteen in my eyes and old enough to defy my parents and do whatever I wanted. For not going to class, I was expelled from high school, and I did not receive my high school diploma.

I enrolled at City College of San Francisco as a full time student in the day and worked a full time job at night. I was very busy and tired working and going to school. Like other young teens, when I started working and brought home a big paycheck, work became a priority rather than my education.

Over the years, still a single, young woman, I was working and lucky enough to travel extensively around the world because my father was an executive with an airline company. I spent 6 years in Japan as a kindergarten English teacher in the day and taught English to Japanese professional businessmen in the evenings. It was a great experience for me to live in a foreign country and have the opportunity to learn another language and culture and to meet friends from all over the world. I learned many things from the Japanese people that I didn't learn here in the U.S. I learned to appreciate nature, manners and punctuality and to respect oneself and others. This once in a lifetime experience, I will keep close in my heart for the rest of my life. My family even says Japan has changed me as a person.

Over the years, I have seen many places, met many people and experienced many things, but getting my diploma has never left the back of my mind. I have been married now for 9 years and have a son who is 7 years old. To give him a better life—a better one than I could have given him before—I decided to go back to school, a decision that changed my life dramatically. With the help and encouragement of my youngest sister, I enrolled in City College. I was very scared because it had been 26 years since
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**Special Feature:
My GED Graduation by Victoria German**

This issue features guest writer, Victoria German. Victoria is a current resident in the Potrero HOPE SF site and is a leader in the planning process for the future of her community. Many thanks to Victoria for sharing her personal story and her vision for HOPE SF.



Victoria German with her proud mother.

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high school, but through work and dedication, I reached my first goal. I learned and studied and received my GED. This is just the first step to reach my educational goal. All my life I have wanted to work with children. I have decided to pursue a degree in Child Development and a minor in Child Psychology. I will continue at City College to work on my associates degree and then transfer to San Francisco State University. At SF State, I will pursue my undergraduate degree and eventually my graduate degree in those fields. It may take many years from now, but I am determined to reach my goals.

In my community in Potrero Hill, a new community will rise in the coming years. It is still in the planning stage, just like my education. In a way they are very parallel. While I am still in school, the community will be rebuilt. From that community, a center will house a childcare center, after-school program, and teen center. I see myself as the director of this children's facility. It will give me the opportunity to give back to my community, the community where my son will grow up. Also, I want to be a role model for other young mothers to achieve their goals in life. A goal that can be reached, despite many obstacles that life may bring to them. But the most important thing is that I can be a model for my son, that he see his mother succeed and that my success help him to achieve his own goals in life.

Hunters View Gets Moving

The Hunters View redevelopment project met a significant milestone this month. Residents in the area of the site where the first housing units will be demolished and rebuilt (Phase I of the project) have begun to move to move into Phase II and Phase III areas of the site. Hunters View will be developed in stages to minimize resident displacement. To provide residents with more support and information in this transition, the Housing Authority has hired a full-time relocation specialist, Monica Hollins. Monica is on site and available to answer any relocation questions. She can be reached at (415) 715-3124.

Service Connector Gets to Know Families

Kyra Worthy, a new addition to the HOPE SF team, is getting to know Hunters View families. Kyra has extensive experience in youth development and family support services and is now the first HOPE SF Service Connector. The Service Connector's role is to work closely with families to develop a plan and build on their unique strengths to accomplish goals such as education, employment, childcare, etc.

While a Service Connector's work keeps them on the move and takes them into people's homes, the formal offices are at Parent University, a family resource center run by Edgewood Family Services and located in the Hunters View Community. Parent University provides outreach and information, community support services (service connection) and parent support and education for families.

Families have many questions about how the construction process will unfold, how to prepare for onsite relocation, and how to access jobs when demolition and construction jobs become available. Kyra is focused on answering these questions and providing support for the 68 families who are moving for the first phase of

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Hunters View construction. If you are a Hunters View resident seeking information about City services and job training opportunities, please contact Kyra at (415) 375-7630 or KyraW@edgewood.org.

Resident Leaders Become Housing Development Experts

The HOPE SF Leadership Academy is a unique and exciting component of HOPE SF. The course is made possible through a partnership between the San Francisco Housing Authority, the Mayor's Office of Housing, and Enterprise Community Partners. Currently in the middle of its second year, this 15-session class takes place bi-monthly for resident leaders from all HOPE SF sites. The Academy educates



Uzuri Pease-Greene (left) and Jasmin Khabay (right), students of the HOPE SF Academy, have fun with a classroom exercise.

participants about the HOPE SF redevelopment process and teaches them how to inform their own communities about the process and to provide input on broader policy and program development for HOPE SF. Recent class topics have included: public housing redevelopment principles and processes, urban planning terms, communication skills-building and negotiation strategies.

The class has had numerous guest speakers and a tour of HOPE VI sites in the area. In class

sessions the participants share stories and ideas from their own experiences, and this unique venue for cross-site collaboration has supported the formation of many new friendships.

“The HOPE SF Academy is the bomb,” says Voncile Baker, Westside Courts resident and current Academy student. “With each class I learn more. I have to do a lot of reading in my binder, so when I go to class I’ll be up on everything.... In the last two sessions, I really understood what is going on, and how the HOPE SF planning, replacement, finance and all of this is going on - for our good.”

If you’d like to learn more about the HOPE SF Leadership Academy or if you are interested in participating in the 2010 HOPE SF Leadership Academy, please contact Dominica Henderson of the San Francisco Housing Authority at hendersond@sfha.org or (415) 715-3215.

Impressed by Hunters View Development Plans, State Awards \$40 Million to Project

The Hunters View development team, led by the John Stewart Company, won two highly competitive state grants this summer. The development team was honored to receive \$30 million (the maximum award) from the State’s Infill Infrastructure Grant Program and \$10 million from the Multifamily Housing Program. These awards are critical to financing the substantial infrastructure improvements across the entire site, including the streets, parks, sewers and utilities, as well as providing permanent financing for the Phase I apartment buildings. Phase I will include 3 separate buildings with a total of 106 new affordable apartments. Both financing programs are funded as a result of the 2006 passage of proposition 1C, which prioritizes “smart growth” development of affordable housing.

Through Basketball, Westside Youth are Informed, Educated and Inspired

Mo' Magic, along with Westside Housing Initiatives, LLC, have discovered an effective way to address and engage the residents 14-25 years of age at Westside Courts. With the support of their sponsor, the Mayor's Office of Community Investment, they developed "Inform-Educate-Inspire," a basketball and youth/young adult empowerment program. Through this program, participants sharpen their basketball skills under the direction of Alton Byrd, a 17-year European Basketball League professional. The goal is to use physical fitness and conditioning to engage young adults and determine what needs and concerns are important to them. Mentoring, group meetings, guest speakers and one-on-one dialog offer young people a chance to voice their opinions and become aware of resources like job training, education and health services. The group meets twice a week at Booker T. Washington Community Center, where they endure a rigorous two-hour practice from 5 to 7 p.m., a time when participants might otherwise be likely to engage in the most non-constructive and mischievous activities.



Coach Alton Byrd (left) prepares the Westside Courts All-Stars for their first game.

Since the program began in June 2009, it has grown from one or two participants to a full and consistent twelve-member team. As a reward for their commitment and hard work, the program has been extended, and the team, the Westside Courts All-Stars, has joined a co-ed basketball league. To date, they have played one of their seven games. They played a great game but lost by a narrow three-point margin. The true victory is watching these young people come together as a team with the support of the community and residents of Westside Courts. For more information about the program, please contact John Howell of Em Johnson Interest at (415)255-8710 or jhowell@emjint.com.

A Busy Fall Awaits Sunnydale Youth

Last spring, the Park and Recreation department had to cut recreational programming for youth due to citywide budget cuts. Both after-school programs within walking distance of the Sunnydale housing development suffered major cuts to their existing programs.

This fall, with school just starting up, parents are thrilled that Mercy Housing California and the Related Companies, the lead developer for Sunnydale, has devoted three full-time staff to community activities and youth programs like music composition, video story-telling and site design.

Mercy Housing's Director of Neighborhood Initiatives is working closely with staff at the Bay Area Video Youth Project to develop a curriculum for an intergenerational story-telling project in Sunnydale. The program kickoff is slated for late fall. Concurrently, Mercy is also working with staff from TURF, GASA, CRN and the Boys & Girls Clubs of both Sunnydale and Visitation Valley to develop a youth master planning group. Youth ages 11 to 18 will learn about the development process and help design open space, recreation areas and public art for the future Sunnydale. For more information about youth development activities at Sunnydale, contact Tonja Boykin at (415) 452-9744 or tboykin@mercyhousing.org.