

Rambling to River Street

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"Hey, is there any chance you could get brown rice," a homeless man named Steve said, pointing to a bin of steaming white rice being served from a table in the back of the River Street

roaming "Street Kitchen" who was recently commissioned by the city to set up a soup kitchen on the River Street property. "Do you want meat?" Freund looked to the next man in line while dipping into a vat of ham-

health permit last week.)

"This is great," an eater named Jim said over his white rice and bean casserole. He was one of 28 in the all-male crowd seeking food by early evening on Monday, and he had been one of closer to 100 eating at the Town Clock the previous week. "They're both good," he surveyed his food and compared it to that at the clock. "But the nice thing about the Town Clock is there's a lot of people there that can't get here, like women with their babies."

Norse took his gripes with the location a step further. "This is a pretty gloomy place.... It looks like a concentration camp zone," he said as he pointed to two fences surrounding the outdoor kitchen, one separating it from the River Street shelter proper, and another keeping feasters off of the city-owned vacant lot adjacent to the shelter.

Even Freund had a few complaints about the situation. Freund's Street Kitchen is a mobile operation, a service he offers on his own to the poor in Watsonville, in Beach Flats and wherever he sees the need. On Monday night he would usually be in Raymond Park, the grassy slope in Beach Flats where a mostly Latino crowd regularly finds his meals. "I'm here because that's where the city wants me to feed, and since they give me the permits it's where I feed," Freund explained of the change of venue. His clientele in Beach Flats, he added, would never venture out to the new location, and were probably doing without this night. Aside from paying out of his own pocket, Freund operates off of irregular grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The city directed more FEMA dollars to Freund for the River Street soup kitchen.

"Politically, I think anybody who wants to serve should be able to," Freund reflected on the controversy with the city. To secure his health permits Freund keeps a thermometer in all hot food and serves with plastic gloves, measures never taken at the Town Clock site. "But," he continued, "these people have a right to be protected, and by eating through me they're being protected. By eating through anybody on the street they're not."

Freund's kitchen is scheduled to operate until January 2, when HRC members privately confide that they plan to resume their meals, sans health permit, at the Town Clock. •

CHIP SCHEUER



Michelle McClain and son Trevor feast at the Town Clock

Shelter. "White rice is really lacking in nutrients for us vegetarians."

"Sorry about that, I've been trying to get brown rice," responded Felix Freund, the one-man operator of the

burgers, moving away a thermometer reading 114°.

"...And don't complain about the rice.... I know."

Freund's River Street kitchen is the latest episode in ongoing tensions between homeless activists and Santa Cruz City politicians. Stuck between the two factions as a sort of peace-keeping force, Freund has lured some eight to 80 people nightly away from the Town Clock, where homeless activists of the Homeless Rights Coalition began serving food illegally and without a health permit on November 26. With the advent of Freund's kitchen last Thursday night, HRC members disassembled their ad hoc soup line. But not without some grumbles.

"There's no question there's an improvement," admitted HRC activist Robert Norse as he stood at Freund's line-up on Monday night. "That they [city officials] are serving free food is a good thing. The fact that the city needed to destroy private activities is not a good thing."

Norse and his cohorts have been arguing since last week that the River Street shelter, tucked as it is behind the highway and down the road from the Harvey West industrial district, is a bad place for a food give-away. And Monday night's feast was a fine setting for them to state their case. (City officials refused use of the Town Clock because of a lack of sanitary facilities and busy traffic; they demanded a

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"The nature of the AIDS disease process causes extreme weakness and disability, usually precluding vigorous efforts to protect one's rights," Isabelle Bacigalupi, chair of the Public Health Commission, adds in a letter to the board of supervisors.

The proposed ordinance targets discrimination in employment, housing and medicine; according to Solomon, it should also have a clause ensuring prompt consideration and action. It is based on an ordinance on the books in the City of San Jose, one of 19 jurisdictions in the state with similar legislation.

The proposed ordinance bars discrimination in employment, including hiring, firing and penalizing workers because they have AIDS; outlaws discrimination in all property transactions and prohibits landlords from refusing to rent to people with AIDS; bars businesses from refusing service to those infected with the AIDS virus; targets discrimination in the schools against children with AIDS or children with parents who have AIDS; and outlaws mandatory AIDS testing. •