

Women's Day: A Collaboration between Street Medicine and Tom Waddell Urgent Care

A Safe Space for Women Experiencing Homelessness to Access Healthcare and More

On August 30, 2018, Tom Waddell Urgent Care and Street Medicine/SF Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) hosted a Women's Day Clinic at 50 Tom Waddell Place. The Women's Day Clinic was created to address disparity in health care for women experiencing homelessness and designed to create a safe space for women-identified people to access health care and dental screenings and other wellness services including haircuts, manicures, makeovers, massages, and clothing.

Though there are more homeless men than women in San Francisco, the Street Medicine Team see disproportionately less female-identified clients and report that young women seen with male partners on the street, rarely ask for services even with an expressed medical need. Female clients who experience violence at the hands of intimate partners or known perpetrators often decline police involvement or access to safe havens. One of the goals of the Women's Day Clinic is to introduce a trusted clinical environment for any homeless woman to access.

Volunteers and staff pulled out all the stops to create a special experience. Students from Ruth Asawa School of the Arts volunteered to help set-up a boutique. Using donated window dressings from Bloomingdale's and Levi's, the students artfully transformed the long basement hallways into a trendy venue, curating pieces of clothing, and styling outfits. Employees and volunteers collected and sorted clothes, shoes, and accessories from their friends and family to stock the boutique, and Levi's donated over 30 pairs of new jeans and outerwear for the event.

Several women took advantage of the mobile shower units provided by [Lava Mae](#), including one woman who had not bathed since her last hospitalization over a month prior. [Haircuts with Heart](#), a non-profit seeking to restore dignity to the underserved, offered head massages, haircuts, manicures, and makeovers. Our very own Street Medicine nurse placed eyelash extensions.

To get the word out about the event, the Street Medicine Team, Homeless Outreach Team, and Homeless Youth Alliance distributed flyers and used social media platforms. This was the third Women's Day and more than one hundred women participated in the event.

Comments from participants included:

"The best part of women's day was the self-care spa – I've never had a day of self-care in my life."

"This is the first time in 62 years that I've gotten to wear eyelashes."

To make this event happen, Street Medicine and Shelter Health partnered closely with Tom Waddell Urgent Care. The clinicians from these teams collaborated, planned, and provided health care for the women who participated. Our beautiful boutique and all sets of eyelashes were made possible by the extra talents of Lousie Bisby, RN on Street Medicine. A very special thanks to our partners who provided the wellness services that are essential to healthcare: Annie Stickel-Rice & team from Lava Mae, Rebecca Beardsley & team from Haircuts with Heart, therapists Abigail Dembo and Diana Valentine from The Center for Harm Reduction Therapy,

Paul Kwapy, Ben Rombro, and the students from SOTA, Kate Payne volunteer, and Faye De Guzman, DPH who organized the lovely food from Ted's. This effort was supported by Street Medicine/Shelter Health Medical Director Barry Zevin and Tom Waddell Urban Health Clinic Medical Director Joseph Pace.

Donations are welcomed year-round. Anyone interested in donating new or gently used clothing and shoes can email Street Medicine Charge Nurse Gina Limon, at gina.limon@sfdph.org.

Event coordinators

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