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SFPD Opens Portsmouth Square “Drop-In” Center 18-154

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Location Will Help Connect More Chinatown Community Members with Bilingual Police Officers

The San Francisco Police Department today announced the opening of a new “drop-in” center in the City’s Chinatown neighborhood to address community members’ needs and safety issues. Bilingual foot patrol officers will be available to residents Wednesdays and Fridays from 4:30PM to 6:00PM in the Portsmouth Square clubhouse.

“When our police have strong ties to our diverse, multilingual communities, people are more likely to feel comfortable working with our officers to ensure public safety in San Francisco,” said Mayor London N. Breed. “The new drop-in center is an extension of our efforts to connect with people where they live and work, and to do so in a culturally competent way.”

The drop-in center is part of SFPD’s ongoing outreach to multilingual communities to identify and address specific safety concerns. SFPD currently has over 490 officers that speak more than 30 different languages. The department is encouraging all bilingual officers to become certified to provide Limited English Proficiency (LEP) services to community members.

“The more points of contact that we can provide our residents, the more we can work together to solve problems,” said SFPD Chief William Scott. “We want to increase officers’ presence and visibility in our neighborhoods, particularly where limited English-speaking communities may under-report crimes or feel hesitant to contact our officers through traditional reporting methods.”

Portsmouth Square is operated by the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department. The clubhouse, located on Washington Street at Walter Lum Place, is managed by Self-Help for the Elderly, which began serving seniors in the Chinatown community in 1966.

“Our community has always under-reported crimes,” said Anni Chung, Executive Director for Self-Help for the Elderly. “We worked very hard to get more bilingual officers to the Central Station so that there’s a chance of building a relationship and rapport with the people that live and work in the Chinatown community. The community will enjoy having the drop-in center.”

“Portsmouth Square was the first public square in San Francisco and is often referred to as Chinatown’s living room,” said San Francisco Recreation & Parks General Manager Phil Ginsburg. “Being able to access multilingual help in the heart of the community is essential. As Rec and Parks plans improvements to this historic plaza, seniors and families can feel confident in gathering safely while building relationships with neighborhood officers.”

District Supervisor Aaron Peskin also will hold monthly office hours at the clubhouse location. Specific dates and times will be determined and announced through his office.

“The Chinatown community has long prioritized a public safety strategy that consists of culturally competent foot patrols and direct relationships with neighborhood police,” said Supervisor Peskin. “The new drop-in center builds on the work that we have done over the years to cultivate these relationships in the community, in recognition of the vital role that peace officers have in addressing everything from safety concerns and youth mentorship to health services and wellness referrals.”

San Francisco Safety Awareness For Everyone (SF SAFE), a nonprofit dedicated to creating a safer San Francisco, will also be onsite during drop-in hours to assist community members with translation services, crime prevention strategies, educational information and other public safety-centric outreach.

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