

Railton Place turns 3

San Francisco's transitional housing program reflects and looks forward.

The Salvation Army's Railton Place in San Francisco—nestled in a high-crime neighborhood in a city with one of the country's highest homelessness rates—celebrated its third anniversary in 2011.

With 110 transitional and permanent housing units, the facility supports some of the city's most vulnerable people: the chronically homeless, recovering addicts and alcoholics, veterans in recovery and aged-out foster youth.

"Railton Place is unlike any program in The Salvation Army—possibly unlike any program in the country," said Captain Lisa Smith, program administrator.

Contributing to the success of Railton Place are its caring staff, case managers and administrators, who create a family-like environment for the clients—some of whom no longer have families of their own. Staff personnel know each resident by name. Dorm floors are co-ed and mix ages from 18-85, allowing older residents to share life experiences with the youth.

The curriculum offers job readiness classes, resume and job application assistance, educational support and counseling, a music class and a weekly food market trip.

Physical fitness and other class opportunities are available at the nearby Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center, which is within walking distance of Railton Place. Every client receives a free membership.

In honor of its three-year existence, a new education lab opened, containing five computers, two printers and access to GED and job readiness software to assist residents with their educational and vocational needs. The center also commemorates the many lives already impacted.

"We just see lives changing for the better," Smith said. "There may be a few that seemingly don't make progress, but for every one of those, there are two or three that shine."

