

put one step in front of the other. And track and field, everybody can do it.

"No matter what you can't do, track and field has an event you can do. If you can't run fast, you can probably throw. And if you can't throw, you can probably jump. Every element of life, you can achieve. All you have to do is try."

McDaniels was working with the San Francisco Parks and Rec when he was assigned to Boedekker Park on the corner of Eddy and Jones in the early 2000s, in the heart of the Tenderloin's drug-addled and homeless-laden streets. McDaniels thought it would be a perfect place to try to get kids inspired, since inspiration is what he saw lacking.

He started holding track meets in the park, encouraging the kids to come around.

"I said to the drug dealers and everyone in the park: 'give me some respect, give me some lane,'" he said.

The key was, he said, drug dealers began to respect McDaniels' energy. They gave him space. Next up, McDaniels built a relationship with San Francisco Police Officer Joe Garrity, whose beat was the Tenderloin. McDaniels approached Garrity and asked for something big: could he hold a track meet in the street?

Garrity's response couldn't have been more positive; he closed down Eddy Street to bus-traffic only, and let the kids run in the street.

McDaniels said kids flocked to the event, and Tenderloin residents hung out of their windows, cheering on the athletes. McDaniels knew he was winning.

As time went on, he drew chalk lines in the park, to approximate a real track. Kids took to it, and when they went away for the first time to Oregon or Las Vegas or Tulare or Sacramento or Oakland or Fairfield or Los Gatos for a track meet, they'd see the lane lines and say: "This looks like Boedekker, Coach!"

Over time, homeless residents of the Tenderloin cheered on the kids, telling McDaniels they remembered a coach who helped them along the way. Some brought balloons or ribbons for the kids. Now, after a decade, McDaniels has the kids running at Kezar Stadium, too.

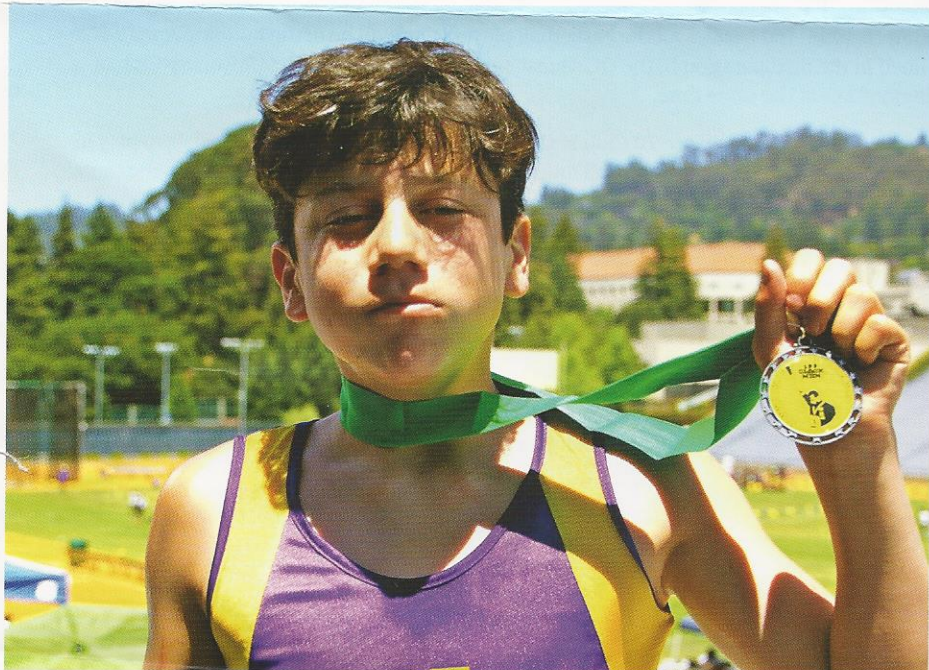
And every kid gets a ribbon of achievement.

"No child can say 'I failed'," he said. "Failure is achievement if you get up and try again. I tell all my kids: I don't count how many times you fail. I count how many times you get up."

Which brings McDaniels back to the story of Enrique. During the course of the interview, the coach produced a letter, written by the boy after a particularly painful time at home. McDaniels said he and his wife were just reading it and realizing it encapsulated their mission.

When he runs track with MacCanDo, Enrique wrote, "I feel free . . . I feel happy."

That's all the fuel the MacCanDo Tenderloin Youth Track Club needs to vault into the future.

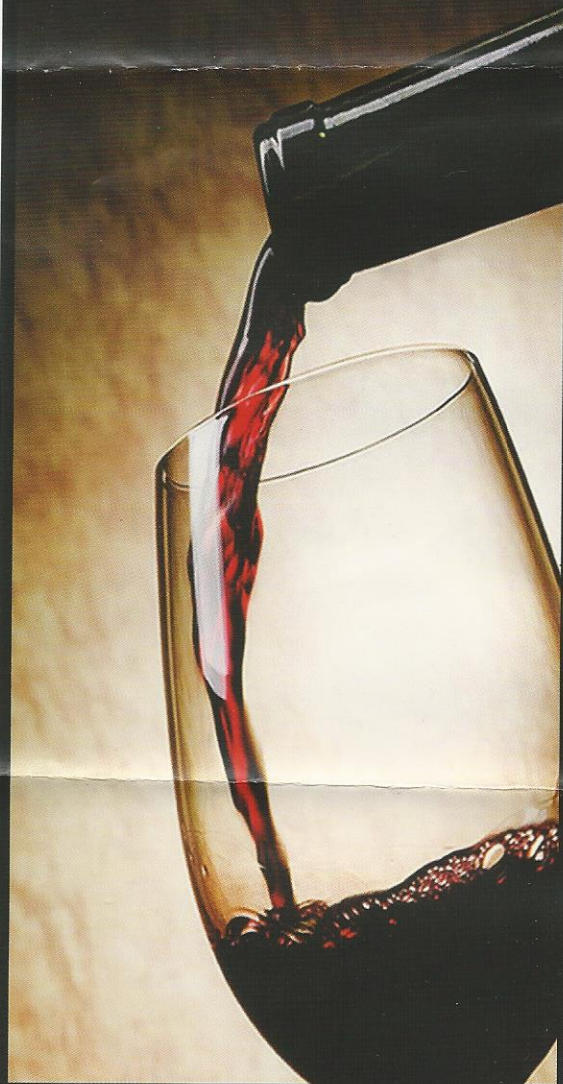


The Olympic Club Foundation's Ultimate Wine Dinner & Auction

SATURDAY, MAY 31, 2014

❖
LAKESIDE CLUBHOUSE

5:30 PM - 10:00 PM



*22 Wine Vintners
Gourmet Food
Luxury Auction Items*

❖
Call 415.345.5230

www.OlympicClubFoundation.com