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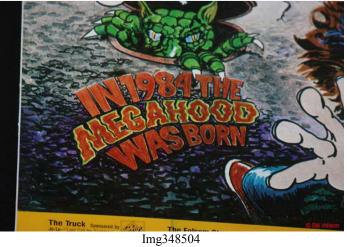
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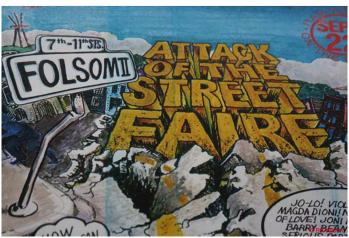
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and redevelopment. AIDS is 15 overtake the gay community, and anti-LGBT forces start to calculate political possibilities in SOMA if the gay community diminishes in numbers and clout. Michael Valerio, an out, gay, Filipino/Spanish activist working on low-income senior housing, and Kathleen Connell, an out gay woman with experience in women's rights, farmworkers' organizing, and community business development, see the need for a forceful effort to defend the South of Market neighborhood and to unify, strengthen, and showcase the vibrant diversity of the entire neighborhood.

At the advice of Harry Britt, Harvey Milk's successor on the city Board of Supervisors, Connell and Valerio create a SOMA festival, inspired by Milk's use of the Castro Street Fair for political organizing. They call it Megahood - The Folsom Street Fair. Featuring SOMA businesses, craftspeople, and musicians, the fair displays the vitality of the "blighted" neighborhood. The street décor for the fair is purchased from Mark Leno's Budget Signs, and students of SOMA's Bessie Carmichael Elementary School, watched over by nuns, decorate the streets with their paintings. The diverse inhabitants of South of Market, including kinky men and women from all over the area, gather on the autumn equinox to celebrate the unique vivacity of the neighborhood.

With an unexpectedly high turnout of 30,000 attendees, 85 vendor booths, 50 supporting organizations and businesses, and 400 volunteers, the fair nets \$17,000, all of which is donated to local charities.

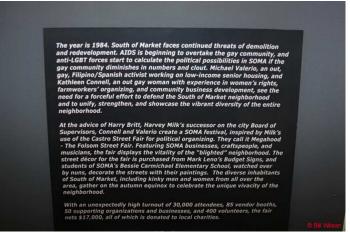
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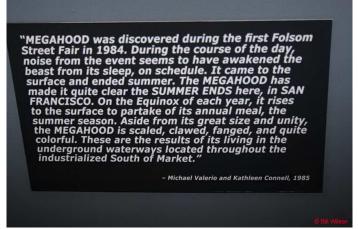
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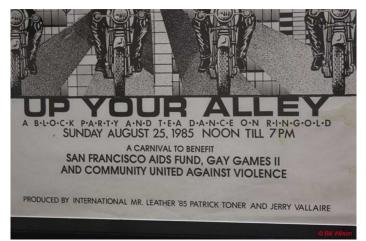
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