

Volunteer Spotlight - July 2009

Elaine Liu

Like many volunteers at Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services (SFBFS), Elaine Liu needed to complete hours for a college course. Since she enjoys working with children she chose to volunteer in the Youth Academy program at SFBFS, which assists first- through sixth-graders with homework, teambuilding and leadership skills. Elaine enjoyed the program so much she decided to continue volunteering after completing her required volunteer hours. That was two and a half years ago.

Elaine loves helping children with their homework, working with them one-on-one for reading and tutoring and helping them learn through recreational activities such as dancing. She attends almost every field trip the group takes, having recently traveled to the Monterey Bay Aquarium, Folsom Zoo and Muir Woods. She admits it can be difficult working with so many youngsters, saying "The kids get so excited on field trips and we have to run to keep up with them, but it's a lot of fun!"

Elaine is an extremely dedicated volunteer, working with children in both the Youth Academy and PlayCare programs. When she first started volunteering at SFBFS, she was studying sociology at Sacramento City College. Through her experience at SFBFS, she later switched her major to Early Childhood Education. Elaine enjoys helping write the curriculum for both youth programs. She is able to combine her volunteer experience with her school research. Her current goal is to incorporate child-centered learning to the PlayCare curriculum, which gives the younger children more independence and helps them direct their own learning experience. Elaine emphasizes that this approach helps teach kids how to take turns, respect one another and helps build vocabulary.

Working with children does have some challenges, but Elaine welcomes them, saying "We need challenges every day so we can learn new ways to solve our problems." She is able to share this



perspective with the children to help them overcome their own obstacles. One of Elaine's favorite parts of volunteering is being able to help the students see their progress.

During her time at SFBFS, Elaine has developed positive relationships with the children, parents, volunteer and staff. Her extra efforts are much appreciated by Aurelia Garcia, Youth Academy and PlayCare Program Manager, who notes "She is such a team player." Other staff and volunteers agree; Elaine's positive attitude and her commitment to the programs make her an invaluable part of the SFBFS volunteer corps.