

Volunteer Spotlight - June 2009

Aiyana Pearson

The Women's Wisdom Project (WWP) depends on dedicated volunteers to both inspire and support the women who participate. Volunteers such as Aiyana Pearson go above and beyond these expectations, and actually become an inspiration to other volunteers here at Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services (SFBFS). Aiyana has been volunteering in the women's art program at SFBFS for two years, making a big impact in a short period of time.

Aiyana first heard about SFBFS while taking classes at Alpha Fired Arts, a local ceramics studio. She was a student alongside one of the WWP artists, and, through her, heard about the art program offered at SFBFS for women who are seeking a supportive and healing environment. She began to volunteer, assisting with Thursday ceramics classes, and her involvement has grown ever since.



In the summer of 2008, Aiyana was taking an art class offered by local artist Tony Natsoulas, and asked to be a ceramics demonstrator at the State Fair. She brought along Veronica Kyle, one of the WWP artists, to give her the opportunity to show her talent at the fair. Aiyana also took the lead on filling out application forms for several of the WWP ladies to have artwork shown at the deYoung Museum in San Francisco. With her help, one of the artists, Cherie Martinson, was accepted and had her art included in one of the deYoung Museum's art shows.

Aiyana takes a true interest in the ladies involved in the WWP. She recently wrote a mini-grant to Sacramento Metro Arts Commission to give three women the opportunity to attend classes at Alpha Fired Arts for four weeks. When the WWP ceramics classes were almost cancelled due to lack of space in the class schedule, Aiyana asked if she could use the space in the back of the classroom on Fridays and start new ceramics classes. After working it out with the other Friday classes, Aiyana now has a full table on Fridays for ceramics. In addition, she has recruited two instructors from Alpha Fired Arts to help her out!

Even though Aiyana is a teacher for WWP, she is also a student. A retired state worker, Aiyana is now attending classes at American River College and will transfer to Sacramento State University

next semester. She is working toward her Bachelor's Degree in Art. For her, volunteering at SFBFS isn't hard work. As she puts it, "it's just a bunch of new friends!"

Helen Plenert, the Program Manager of WWP, is extremely appreciative of Aiyana's dedication, saying, "Aiyana is an amazing volunteer who just loves to come and help these ladies. She always seems to be looking for new things that could improve their lives and their artwork. She takes these ladies under her wings. I don't know what we'd do without her."