

Volunteer Spotlight - November 2010

Cynthia Bows

Cynthia Bows, a volunteer in the Women's Wisdom Art program at Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services (SFBFS), recently celebrated her 80th birthday in June and her energy and passion for serving others has continually grown over the years. The Women's Wisdom Art program offers free art classes to adult women of diverse backgrounds and situations who benefit from a supportive and healing environment through art. Cynthia has been an important part of this program since March 2009 when she started volunteering in the Friday ceramics class, one of the most popular forms of art in Women's Wisdom Art.

Just walking into the ceramics class on a Friday, one can feel the enthusiasm that Cynthia spreads to all the students. She works with each student individually, offering tips, ideas, hugs and support. The students call to her to ask for advice or critique. The class has grown to maximum capacity over the past year. Cynthia is not the only volunteer on Fridays, but there has been weeks when she has had to lead the entire class by herself and has done so with ease. Her presence and knowledge have been essential to maintaining this popular class. Not only that, she is also an accomplished sculptor and brings her creative ideas forward, as well as going above and beyond to make the women feel good about the art they are creating.

One of Cynthia's major contributions has been the development of a scholarship fund for the Women's Wisdom Art students. In 2009, the program applied for and received a grant to send five Women's Wisdom Art students to advanced ceramics classes at a local studio, Alpha Fired Arts. Because the program received the grant in 2009, it was not eligible to apply in 2010. When Cynthia heard this, she began to spread the word to her families, friends, neighborhood association, her fellow artists, clubs, and anyone who would listen. With their help, Cynthia has raised close to \$1,000. With these funds, SFBFS will be able to send five women to a month of advanced ceramics classes, all supplies included. For the women receiving the scholarship, this is a one in a lifetime opportunity to develop their artistic talent and continue to heal.

Cynthia has been volunteering at SFBFS for 5 hours per week since March 2009. She has contributed over 200 hours in the Women's Wisdom Art program. Her enthusiasm, her passion for art, and her ability to share both of these with the students in the program have made a difference in many lives. Women in the program are often suffering from an illness, disability, or loss, but Cynthia always finds a way to make them feel as if they can accomplish anything. She has a unique spirit and makes everyone feel welcome to sit alongside her at the ceramics table.

Cynthia Bows recently received Volunteer of the Year Supporting Arts and Recreation award at the 2010 Volunteer Spirit Awards, presented by the Volunteer Center of Sacramento. Congratulations, Cynthia, and thank you for your continued dedication to SFBFS and the Women's Wisdom Art program!

