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Telling Youths' Stories Using Media Arts





"We're a media-based arts organization, working with kids on photography, film, and multimedia. We use a mentoring model, usually a ratio of 1-to-1, sometimes 1-to-3. We're about reaching fewer youth in a more meaningful way." – Lynn Warshafsky, Co-Founder and Executive Director

Creativity and expression build much-needed hope and confidence in youth. In today's digital age, having access to the latest media arts technology and equipment is essential, but being able to provide these tools to youth is a big challenge for families lacking funding and resources.

Venice Arts' mission is to ignite youths' imagination, mentor their creativity, and expand their sense of possibility through high quality, accessible media-based arts education programs. Venice Arts also serves as a catalyst for people of all ages, living in low-income or underrepresented communities, to create and share personal and community stories through photography, film, and multimedia.

Program Area: Telecom Education and Literacy

Region Served: Los Angeles County

Demographics of Populations Served: Hispanic/Latino(a) and African American; Urban, Low-income/at-risk, homeless, youth

Why and How CCPF Supported Venice Arts: In Neighborhoods's Work:

CCPF makes grants that support a broad range of telecom education and literacy related projects, however, the most successful projects share one key characteristic in common. Projects like Venice Arts that make the technical aspects of media and visual arts relevant to learning and the creative process have demonstrated their ability to teach young people how to effectively tell their own stories while also enhancing their leadership, educational and vocational skills. Venice Arts' willingness to partner with other community sites in order to bring its expertise to a broader audience is another characteristic that distinguishes the good work being done by Venice Arts.

CCPF provided general support in 2009 to conduct outreach and encourage use of media arts and technology amongst low-income youth and their parents, as well as give youth an opportunity to have mentors, obtain training, and pursue careers related to graphic arts/multimedia. Venice Arts used these resources toward its Arts Mentoring and Advanced Studies programs.

"CCPF has supported our Art Mentoring program, which offers education and mentoring in photography, filmmaking, and multimedia to low-income kids in the community. CCPF also helped fund our Advanced Studies program, a work development and college readiness program on technology and telecommunications. We place students in internships in creative, arts and entertainment production businesses." – Lynn Warshafsky, Co-Founder and Executive Director

Results:

Venice Arts has engaged hundreds of low-income youth in creative projects that advance media arts and visual education. Utilizing a broad range of media and visual arts tools, the youth enrolled in programs at Venice Arts gain valuable skills that enhance their ability to achieve both educational and vocational goals. Currently, Venice Arts serves over 400 low-income youth per year across Los Angeles, nationally and internationally.

With support from CCPF, Venice Arts has accomplished the following:

- Approximately 200 youth per year participate in the Art Mentoring program.
- About 7-10 internships per year are offered through the Advanced Studies program.
- In addition to the Venice facility, there are 3 partner sites in Los Angeles County that deliver similar media and visual arts programs to their respective communities.

Some of Venice Arts' youth success stories include:

- Francesca Thomas, a participant at Venice Arts for more than two years, lives
 at a local shelter for homeless families. Her photography and story an audio
 clip in which she talks about her life and the impact of Venice Arts' photo
 program was featured on the front page of Yahoo! News.
- Evelyn has been working at Anonymous Content, a production and management firm in Culver City, which creates and produces music videos, commercials, films, and manages and develops scripts for films. Working under the direction of VP of Features, Evelyn has been reading scripts and learning the business of features development.



While continuing to intern at Venice Arts, Chris has also been placed at an
outside internship at SWAY Studio, a visual effects studio also located in Culver
City. Due in part to his experience there, Chris has stated in a recent blog post
that he wants to focus on fashion photography as a career.

"I've really found a strategic partner in CCPF. Cassandra worked closely with me in creating a network of arts and non-arts organizations working in media technology with youth. 'How can great programs be sustained? What are possibilities for my grantees that have strong programs to build capacity and work with other organizations with less capacity?' It speaks to CCPF's commitment to supporting youth development and technology beyond financial resources." - Lynn Warshafsky, Co-Founder and Executive Director

Visit Venice Arts: In Neighborhoods's website for more information

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