



## Betsy Goldman around Venice

# How the arts in Venice supplement 'the three Rs'

BY BETSY GOLDMAN

The three Rs — Reading, (W)riting and (A)rithmetic — are the staples of education. The aptitude of a child is based on how well he or she does in these subjects.

Greatly overlooked, especially now, are the arts — for it's in this field of education where students who may not necessarily excel in

the core courses can find expression, blossom and be directed to the future.

But it has become harder for schools to offer art classes to all students and schools have to search out art programs on their own.

Here are some local arts programs in and out of schools in the local area.

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## VENICE ARTS: IN NEIGHBORHOODS

Venice Arts: In Neighborhoods brings artists together with low-income youths whose access to the arts has been limited, to nurture their creativity, imagination and talent that help build positive relationships and improve their academic performance and job readiness skills.

Two such participants are sisters Francesca Thomas, 15, and Alex, 14, who have been with the program for two years. It has made a big difference in their lives in a short time.

Francesca was shy at first and tended to have a closed mind. Now she is more creative and explores various ways of working with a camera.

"In the past I wasn't exposed to a lot of things," she says.

Photography has brought out her personality. She has already found her niche — darkroom printing.

Venice Arts lead artist Joanne Kim has worked closely with Francesca.

"She was really independent about coming in and printing on her own as much as she could," says Joanne. "I taught her how to process her own film and she became proficient at that.

"Then she started helping me in the gallery and supporting the photography programs in addition to film processing and printing."

interest level, the amount of time they want to put into this and their passion for it."

To find out more about Venice Arts, [venice-arts.org](http://venice-arts.org)

These nonprofit organizations are able to exist for children because many people who are more fortunate have contributed to them. The need for financial and



SELF PORTRAIT by photographer Francesca Thomas.

material resources is never-ending.

Hubbard of Venice Arts sees it this way:

"What I'm struck by is the amount of money that is being

A yearly position in the Youth Art Mentor program opened up and Francesca was chosen to fill it. The mentor is paid for working eight to ten hours a week.

"She has been really amazing and very responsible," says Joanne.

Francesca, along with Alex, were two of three low-income students given scholarships to attend the International Visual Arts Program in Idyllwild this summer.

"I think these girls are more energetic and passionate about doing this creative kind of work with photography than most kids I've seen," says Venice Arts creative director Jim Hubbard.

"They stand out in terms of their

pumped into new housing and rehab housing in this neighborhood — we're talking hundreds of millions of dollars.

"I've been thinking about the fact that we've taken a couple of trips to Africa and seen how the people live there.

"I think it would really be neat if the neighborhood would adopt the idea of helping people that are here who have so little and who need help from time to time with resources.

"While people may not want to help those in Africa, right here in this very rich neighborhood it wouldn't take much on everyone's part to chip into a pot to help other people who need help in our community."



VENICE ARTS — From left are creative director Jim Hubbard, youth program artists Francesca Thomas and Alex Thomas, and lead artist Joanne Kim. (Photo by Betsy Goldman)