

Amye's Story

Some applications for Rossmoor Scholarship Foundation (RSF) stipends are simply breathtaking. “Growing up in the slums of San Francisco [in the 1990s] with a drug-addicted mother, I experienced a world where insecurity and neglect were the norms,” writes Amye Louise Elbert in her 2024 RSF application. “The memories of homelessness, food insecurity, and exposure to mental and sexual abuse are etched in my mind.” As a child, school was most important to her “because it provided two meals a day.” Diagnosed with dyslexia and ADHD as a youth, she spent much of her early education in special classes. But because she knew she was “intelligent and capable,” in high school she insisted on taking regular courses. Then she left high school before graduating, became a mother to three children, and after earning a GED walked away from an abusive relationship with their father. She is now raising her grandson, alone.

Three years ago Amye decided to enroll at Los Medanos College (LMC) to “pursue my dream of becoming an art teacher.” There she “utilized every resource available,” including tutoring, disability services, and constant communication with professors and counsellors. Her experiences at LMC, she admits, “have profoundly shaped my academic journey, teaching me the value of perseverance, self-advocacy, and the transformative power of education.” Amye relayed all of this information in her RSF application; little wonder RSF trustees decided to award her not only one of 84 RSF stipends given out this year, but also two add-ons—the Frank Wang Chinese-American Association Award and the Eleanor Knapp Award for single mothers. That brought her total stipend to \$8,500.

Overwhelmed by the grant Amye quickly sent the Foundation a note of thanks that is as breathtaking as her application essay. “Receiving these awards not only provides financial support but also serves as a powerful affirmation of my dedication to pursuing a higher education and career in art education.” “Affirmation.” For 58 years now RSF has been giving out scholarships to local high school and community college students, and over those nearly six decades trustees have become convinced that “affirmation” of student abilities is one of the greatest values these scholarships offer.

And how did this African American single mom qualify for the Frank Wang Chinese-American Association Award? At LMC Amye took an Asian art history course and in it saw a deep parallels between Chinese American and African American cultures. She recognized “the hard work and sweat that Asian Americans and African Americans have historically contributed to building this great nation, brick by brick, and track by track.” In her teaching she fully intends profile these cross-cultural Chinese American and African American experiences, and use art education “as a means to bridge cultural divides.”

“It feels good to know that there are wonderful people in the world who care about others and want to help them overcome their challenges and adversities,” Amye writes at the end of her “thank you” note. “Your support reinforces my determination to make a positive impact in the field of art education and empower future generations through creativity and expression.” In the Fall Amye will be a student at UC-Berkeley.

Submitted to Rossmoor News by: Wayne A. Wiegand, RSF Trustee