

Picture This

AmeriCorps Program Coordinator Shows Children the Power of the Lens



Jasmin Cotman



Above: Picture taken by Moneshia Tynes, 11. Using special computer software, Tynes was able to change the color and look of the photo.

“O hhh! Look at this picture, Aquazia!” exclaimed 7 year-old photography class participant, Daizhua Jones. Jones, along with Jamilia Mason, 8; Aquazia Jones, 9; Jada Dorsey, 11; and Moneshia Tynes, 11, of the Yorktown Square/Rivermeade Apartments after-school program learned how to have fun with a camera by participating in a weekly photography class in February. The class was taught by AmeriCorps Program Coordinator Jasmin Cotman over the course of four weeks. Students in the class learned about the various parts of a camera and how to take pictures by focusing on different viewing angles and lengths.

“At first the kids thought it was wrong to take a picture that was too close to the person or at a funny angle,” said Cotman “but after a while, they understood that it was okay, and even thought it was kind of cool.”

Each class participant was given a disposable camera to take home and asked to photograph people or things that make them happy. Their pictures were developed and then transferred to a photo cd. At the next class, the students learned how to edit their shots with free photo editing software called PhotoScape (www.photoscape.org), which allowed them to alter the content, color, shape, and size of their images.



Above: Picture taken by Aquazia Jones, 9. To create a more interesting photo, Aquazia positioned her subject off-center of the sidewalk lines.

“I really liked learning how to crop the pictures,” said Jada Dorsey, “because now I know how to take out people that I didn’t want in the picture!”

AmeriCorps member Cheryl Drewry-Guardia commented on the noticeable difference in the students’ enthusiasm levels after their photography lessons.

“They were really excited about their pictures, and would even work on them when Jasmin wasn’t at the center,” said Drewry-Guardia.

In total, the students took over 100 pictures! On the last day of class, each student edited their top three photos and then wrote about why they liked the pictures and what they did to edit them.

An avid photographer herself, Cotman was thrilled at the chance to share her photography passion with the young residents in Yorktown, Virginia.

“It is such fun to see the children learning how to express themselves with a camera,” said Cotman. “They’ll be able to use the photography skills they learned in this class for the rest of their lives, and that’s a great feeling.”

Cotman plans to take the photography class “on the road” this summer to other CHP properties.



Above: Picture taken by Jamilia Mason, 8. Jamilia accidentally snapped this unusual, but eye-catching, self-portrait of herself and a friend.