

"I wholly disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."
Voltaire

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Sylvia Miller Honored for Waterman Gardens Program

By Dianne Anderson
Staff Writer

Waterman Gardens holds a lot of great memories for Sylvia Miller, not necessarily because she's seen some of her best personal growth there, but because it represents something bigger than herself.

And now, she's passing some of what she's learned in life to all the teens and youths in the community who think they may not be able to achieve their goals.

Her son, a straight "F" student, was her inspiration.

He quickly turned it around from being a teacher's worst nightmare to getting straight A's, and graduating high school by the eleventh grade.

"He proved the point that he could do it and he convinced me to go back to school," Ms. Miller said.

From her son's cue, she soon knocked out a Human Resources degree at Cal State University, and a certificate in drug and alcohol counseling from San Bernardino Valley College. She

returned to the community to start her own outreach program at Waterman Gardens Housing Authority, where she also serves on their board.

Her son is still in school, working on his second degree. Back then, she said it wasn't



easy making his way through one of the toughest areas during one of the roughest times for the city.

"He did something that made me proud, and I also made him proud," she said.

Through a few of her programs, the Friday Night Live, Flash Club Live, and Kids Live, she manages to put a cool spin on a fun place to hang out without drugs or alcohol. Even without artificial stimulation, local teens are feeling the vibe just because they know someone cares.

"When one kid sees that you have so much interest in one or two kids, then they all come and join and see if I can help with their interest," Ms. Miller said.

In 2009, she started the program on internship from Cal Sate University, San Bernardino. Once there, it was hard not to get emotionally involved and harder to say goodbye. She's been there ever since and while running the program has recruited eight

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Waterman Garden "live" Participants

Sylvia Miller

(Cont. from Page A-1)

other interns.

Besides her Friday evening programs, she has a Youth Counseling Leadership Board that has held a town hall meeting with the mayor downtown. She said it's important to make them feel like they are needed in the community. She gives them leadership skills to be successful.

"I take them places, give them something that makes them feel good," she said. "I just reach out to see what their goal and passion is and help as much as I can to reach that goal with them."

Last month, Ms. Miller was honored as an unsung hero by Molina at the health provider's fifth annual Molina Healthcare of California Community Champions Awards dinner. There, she was awarded 500 new Dr. Seuss books from Molina Foundation Book Buddies program.

The Housing Authority nominated her for the award for her Club Live program. Miller has participated with the residents' advisory board for years as a Section 8 recipient.

But mostly her kid base is growing by word of mouth. Now, she has over 100 kids signed up.

"Self-sufficiency is what my passion is; people from the low income community don't know how to be self-sufficient, it's hard for them," she said.

Her program works in partnership with the Public Health Department and she is currently pursuing her nonprofit status. She wants to teach teens and young people how to make their dreams come true, and learn how to write grants.

"It's to show people that they can do it on their own," she said. "Even you can't find a job, try to find something that you have a passion for and go for it. If you have a goal, you have to just reach for it."

For more information, contact Ms. Miller at smiller2092@yahoo.com