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## Mutual Housing residents take advantage of SMAC art classes

By Dell Richards

Mutual Housing California recently received a grant from the Sacramento Municipal Arts Commission (SMAC) for an arts program at their community in North Highlands.

At the classes, participants such as Mutual Housing at the Highlands resident Crystal Irwin used specially designed techniques created by Sierra College Adjunct Professor of Art Patricia Wood.

“The idea is to approach art in many different ways instead of just one academic way,” said Wood, who also is the Visual Arts Coordinator at Shore Center South. “When you bring as many different points of view to art as possible, students are not tied to one way of learning and you can get results quickly.”

The approach creates an immediate sense of success instead of studying art for years to become competent.

Doing different exercises at the community room of the Mutual Housing development, students started with basic form—working from abstracts to still life and moving from black-and-white to color. They also used images from other art and photographs for inspiration.

Irwin felt so inspired by the classes, she got the rest of her family to come with her. “My whole family—my husband and son—came with me and really enjoyed them,” said Irwin. “It was wonderful to have such professional-level instruction.”

Because the program helps people feel successful quickly, it can raise self-esteem. “With some practice, people feel a sense of mastery,” said Wood.

A former adjunct professor at American River College, Wood has taught art for more than 15 years. She has exhibited internationally and been featured in *New American Painting*.

Classes met weekly for seven sessions at the 90-apartment community that, in addition to educational programs, also provides housing and support services for formerly homeless people as well as others.

SMAC’s Arts Stabilization Program enriches the community by bringing art to adults and children who would rarely experience it otherwise.

Founded in 1988, Mutual Housing California develops and operates well-designed rental housing for modest-income households. The communities have 2,750 residents.

Through Mutual Housing’s focus on leadership, the nonprofit provides training and mentoring as well as community-building activities and services for residents and neighbors. For more information, visit <http://www.mutualhousing.com>.



Sierra College professor Patricia Wood demonstrates an art technique to Mutual Housing California resident Crystal Irwin.