

Turner Center spotlight: Where aspiring artists become inspiring teachers

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cs class for teen

Submitted photo: Turner Center class assistant Iliana Liborio is shown working with a second-grade student.

The Turner Center offers more than 50 beginner-friendly classes and workshops for youth and adults each month. Instrumental in the success of these programs are a team of two dozen art instructors and assistants, who help students bring their artistic visions to life. Five of these assistant instructors shared their experiences working in art classes, and why they love teaching others.

Chayna Figueroa, Iliana Liborio, Phylisicia Lundy, McKenzie Simpson and Elizabeth Wilson — some of the Turner Center’s class assistants — have all been pursuing art since high school, many of them since childhood.

Wilson said she doesn’t remember a time when she wasn’t interested in pursuing art...

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“I remember dressing as an artist for my career day in second grade, and that passion has continued through my life,” she said.

Figueroa noted that art has always been an interest of hers.

“What captured my interest was that you can bring what you see in your head to life for others to enjoy,” she said.

Class assistants are regularly recruited through active partnerships with educators at institutions such as Valdosta State University and Lowndes High School.

The Turner Center works to give aspiring artists experience in working with a variety of student ages and backgrounds, which the assistants can apply to careers as artists and/or teachers after graduation. The assistants perform critical functions for the Turner Center, as they work with lead instructors to develop classes that promote learning, provide hands-on assistance and inspire students of all ages.

When asked what they love most about working with students at the Turner Center, these assistants described the thrill of seeing students excited about art.

Lundy, who has assisted youth classes and is now an instructor for youth summer art camps

“My favorite part is when the students add me to their art,” Lundy said.

Figueroa described the joy of watching art bring together groups of people.

“All things, including art, are better when the fun is shared with others,” she added.

Figueroa also encouraged others to become involved in the arts.

“Try something new — try many things. Art comes in many forms and can be created by anyone,” she said.

Liborio, a regular youth class assistant, said that working with children is awesome.

“They are filled with so much imagination,” she said. “Once you ask them what the story is behind their work, you can see the excitement in their eyes.”

Simpson, who assists the Turner Center’s monthly Adult Pottery Workshop, said that most adult classes are scheduled with work in mind.

“There are evening classes to unwind after a long day, and Saturday workshops you can take with friends to make a day of it – making art just for the fun of it is so important,” Simpson added.

To learn more about classes at the center, visit turnercenter.org/classes or contact Art Education Administrator Hailey Rathmann at hrathmann@turnercenter.org or 229-247-2787.