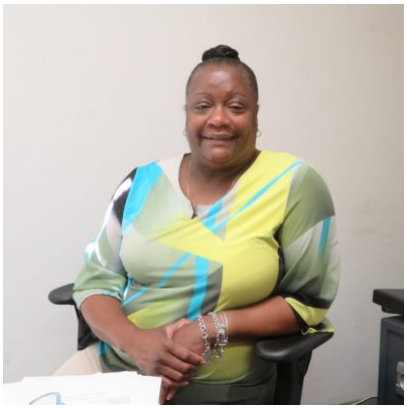

Director of I.T. Bookman wants to widen community centerâ??s embrace

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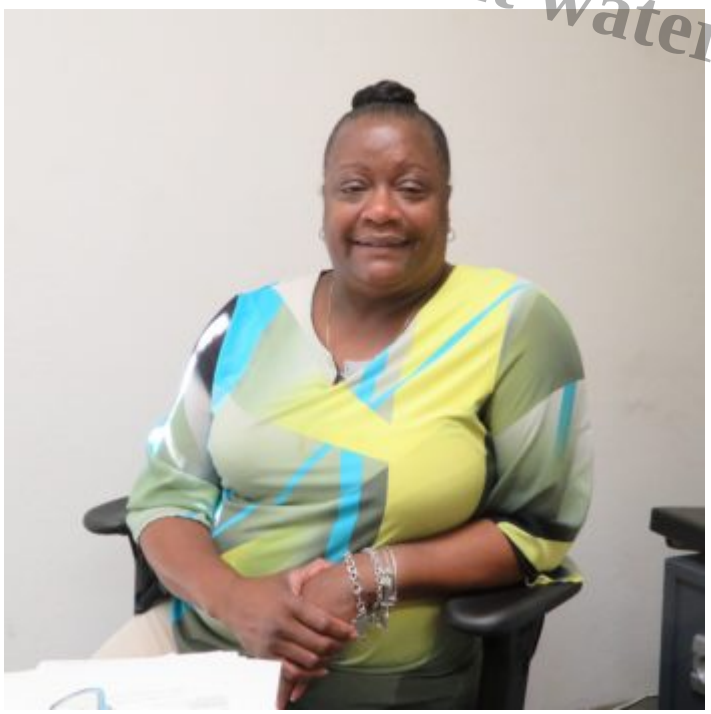

Felisia Thibodeaux is the new executive director at the I. T. Bookman Community Center. (Photo by Judy Goddess)

Felisia Thibodeaux, the new executive director of the I. T. Bookman Community Center, had been on the job just over four months when we talked, and she had already developed some big plans.

â??We need to redirect I. T. Bookman â?¦ for the whole community, including people with disabilities,â?• she said. â??We want to offer something for everybody to engage in.â?•

â??Founded in 1985 by I. T. Bookman, a member of the neighboring Pilgrim Community Church, and largely supported by the church and its members, the center provided a multipurpose space for Sunday School classes as well as community events. The center currently receives most of its support from the San Francisco Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) and the Stonestown YMCA, which operates its after-school program.

In the years since its founding, new families have moved into the Ingleside. Where once the community was primarily African-American, today it is 52 percent Asian. â??The neighborhood has changed,â• Thibodeaux said, and â??weâ??re not reaching them. Only eight percent of our members are Asian. We need to reach out to that community. We need to add a Chinese-speaking person for outreach and engagement to the Asian community.â•

She also plans to bring Asian foods and art into the building in addition to celebrate the African-American culture. While opening the center to a wider population, she intends to make sure longtime clients continue to feel valued. One idea it to put their photos in the lobby.

But more than widening the diversity of participants, the center needs to offer more services.

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â??Our center is one of the lowest-funded senior programs in the city. We need to add new services, like information and referral, case management and nutritional education,â• Thibodeaux said. She also wants to start an onsite lunch program. â??Because so many of our seniors live on hills and canâ??t get out of their houses, weâ??ll need a shuttle to bring them to the center.â•

Before bringing in new programs, however, she wants the seniors to visit other Department of Aging and Adult Services-funded senior centers to see how they do things. â??Weâ??ll look at their food, culture, music and services. Then weâ??ll talk about what we might want here. We want to get our juices moving.â•

Intergenerational programming is also on her agenda. She would like to see seniors stay one afternoon for an hour of conversation and storytelling with children in the after-school program.

Thibodeaux is inviting the community to celebrate the redirection of the center. Weâ??re Growing Up and Weâ??re Growing Old, will be held at I. T. Bookman on June 30, from 10 a.m. â?? 2 p.m.; 446 Randolph St., corner of Arch; 415-586-8020.

Litquake for Elders at Cayuga Connectors



> Adrenaline ran high at the Litquake Elder Project reading, with the audience of fellow students and friends listening intently and enthusiastically applauding.

Benita McCown-Harperâ??s mother sat in the front row. Others brought friends or neighbors, even children. It was a celebration and final reading of the first Litquake Elder Project with Cayuga Community Connectors.

The project is focused on making sure each participant is supported and guided to produce work they are proud of and feel safe to share, Project Director Lisa Galloway said. â??While framed as a writing workshop, the Elder Project has the equally important effect of building supportive communities for the participants to voice their stories.â?•

Litquake brings published, professional writers into the community to teach writing to students and adults of all ages. The Elder Project is the first effort to focus exclusively on seniors. Galloway deliberately selected the four teaching artists/instructors for the Cayuga program â?? Charlie Getter, Marina Lazzara, Julie Rogers and Kevin Dublin â?? as representative of different generations,

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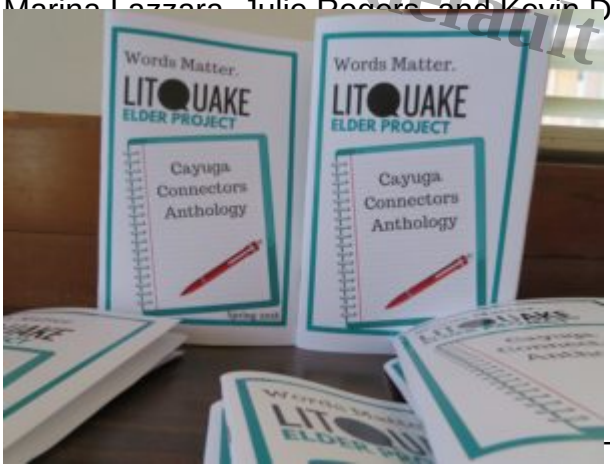

The students, too, were diverse. â??Some of us had never written before; others brought years of experience. One or two said they took the class to find their voice. People started small and quiet, but they gained confidence over the course of the program. We all had different writing styles, but we all supported each other,â?• said Grace Dâ??Anca, one of the writers.

Adrenaline ran high at the May 2 reading, with the audience of fellow students and friends listening intently and enthusiastically applauding. â??It was amazing to see the students at Cayuga write such powerful and personal poems that they bravely shared with the group and a public audience of over 40 people,â?• said Galloway. The poems will continue to be shared in the chapbook produced by Litquake.

While the celebration marked the culmination of Cayugaâ??s daytime program, the Connectors are supporting a new Litquake Elder Project starting May 8. It will meet from 6-7:30 p.m. through July 17 at Excelsior Works!, 5000 Mission St. Call Patti Spaniak for information: 646-409-7775.

Category

1. All Posts

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