

Cissy Smith

African American Family & Cultural Center



Champion for Change
Oroville, CA

“I want to help everyone in my community to eat healthy and to lead healthier lives. Change is hard - we need to help each other.”

Cissy Smith is the receptionist at the African American Family & Cultural Center in Southside Oroville. But another of her true passions is the community garden she helped to start just down the street. She knew that she and others in her community needed to eat more fruits and vegetables, but the cost of fresh produce was sometimes a barrier. So she decided to do something about it. When committees were forming for neighborhood improvement projects, Cissy’s hand shot up.

Using an empty lot loaned by another neighborhood resident, the garden was created. It took some time, and a lot of hard work and perseverance, but the empty lot was transformed into a colorful garden filled with tomatoes, peppers and greens of all sorts. Southside community members are encouraged to work in the garden, and share in the produce at harvest time.

Cissy has successfully made changes in her own diet as well. When she was told by her doctor that her blood sugar was getting high, she decided to take matters into her own hands. By eating more fruits and vegetables, and being more active, she was able to lose 15 pounds and bring her blood sugar down without medication.

Last fall the African American Family & Cultural Center along with community partners, held a “Food Day” celebration where Cissy was one of the driving forces of this project.

Hundreds of neighborhood residents turned out to sample healthy foods and learn how to start their own gardens. The event was a huge success, thanks to everyone involved. Cissy is a true “Champion for Change”.



This material was produced by the California Department of Public Health’s Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch with funding from USDA SNAP-Ed, known in California as CalFresh. These institutions are equal opportunity providers and employers. CalFresh provides assistance to low-income households and can help buy nutritious food for better health. For CalFresh information, call 1-877-847-3663. For important nutrition information, visit www.CaChampionsForChange.net.