

## Employee Profile: Syreeta Thomas

By Rob Jackson, Recreation Leader 1

Syreeta Thomas joined Philadelphia Parks & Recreation in July 2010 as a summer Recreation Specialty Instructor (RSI) for [James Wright Recreation Center](#). Raised in West Philadelphia, Syreeta went to The Philadelphia High School for Girls and spent summers working at Shepard Recreation Center. Syreeta holds an Associate's Degree in Elementary Education and currently studies Middle Grades Education at Temple University with a content concentration in Science and Language Arts.

Presently, Syreeta works as an after-school GSI for James Wright Recreation Center. In 2011, she helped to redesign the Teen Center by painting murals on the walls. Her love of Art resonates in the activities she engages the after school students in. "The most important thing to teach the children is to have confidence," says Syreeta. "I was never one to allow a child to think they were not 'good' at something. Everyone has something they're good at." She coordinates activities that enrich the students' minds and self-esteem and constantly works on ways to improve her program. "I learn more about myself as I learn about the students. The experience they give me is incomparable."

Syreeta instructs and organizes activities such as arts & crafts, dramatic play, dance, cooking class and much more. She works diligently to prepare a fun and safe experience for the students. She incorporates sports activities as much as possible and hopes to start a track club with the students. "You have to play with them, that's important. You can't just tell them to go play, that's no fun," she says when asked to give the most important parts of incorporating activities. Syreeta also uses her education to incorporate enrichment activities through play.

Syreeta has a unique combination of experience working with children, teens and the community. As a teenager, she received a citation from the Mayor of Philadelphia for her work on an outreach symposium entitled *Girls Succeeding In Math And Science* in 1998. Following her two summers with Shepard Recreation Center, she worked for three summers with the West Philadelphia YMCA as a Swim Camp Counselor and Arts & Crafts Director. She works closely with the school her four children attend to ensure the students continue to receive a quality education and meaningful recreation through the School Advisory Council. She also works to support the members of the community as well to strengthen the community through the school.

Syreeta Thomas anticipates graduation in Fall 2015. She remains committed to Philadelphia Parks & Recreation and hopes to continue to work to improve children's lives in her classroom as well as through Out-of-School Time Programs.