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Armed with cameras, kids told to portray their hopes

By **ERNE SUGGS**
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
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For a 9-year-old, Tajee Barnes worries too much.

In fact, a lot of the kids who gather after school at the Salvation Army Boys & Girls Club of Greater Atlanta worry a lot — or at least see the big picture.



JOHNNY CRAWFORD/Staff
(ENLARGE)

Photojournalist Linda Solomon shows (from left) Ebony James and Abriel Jefferson how to use her camera as part of a nationwide photography project with underprivileged kids.

Asked Wednesday at the downtown Atlanta facility to list their hopes, only a couple of the 15 kids chosen for a new photography project picked things such as iPods, PlayStations and fame.

Asia Thomas hopes to go to heaven.

Adrian Crowder hopes to pay her father's cable bill.

Marchella Allen hopes for rain.

And among other things, Barnes hopes to give his mom, "the best day of her life."

"I am not surprised," said his mother, Angel Barnes. "He is a caring kid who wants the world to be happy. But he is too concerned about things. He is trying to save the world at 9."

Short of saving the world, the kids will spend the next two days documenting their worlds and recording their "Pictures of Hope" on film. The project, the brainchild of photojournalist Linda Solomon, is designed to give the kids a unique opportunity to express themselves.

Before she is finished, Solomon will visit 10 cities and hand out dozens of disposable cameras. "What I have learned the most from this project is to listen and understand that what they ask for is what is truly important," Solomon said. "One mother said to me that this is one time that her child has had a voice. One photo can change a life."

During Wednesday's workshop, Solomon discussed the basic fundamentals of photography with the kids.

She teaches them how to shoot horizontally and vertically, shows them how to use the flash and reminds them to not take pictures of their friends, but of their hopes and dreams.

A former columnist for the Detroit News, Solomon said she got involved in the project, financed by General Motors, to give "kids a chance to see that they matter."

"When we discussed launching the project, we wanted to show that someone cares about their future. That is really primary," Solomon said. "They are hoping for world peace and a good education. They recognize that is a beautiful hope to have."

On Friday, the kids will ship their film to Solomon. General Motors then will make greeting cards from the photos, sell them and donate the proceeds to the local Boys & Girls Club.

Almost as soon as Solomon was finished, Tajee began his assignment. He wanted to gather all the kids together to shoot them smiling, because he "wants to make the world happy."

"I haven't been taking pictures very long," Tajee said. "I just gotta know what I really want in life."



JOHNNY CRAWFORD/Staff
(ENLARGE)

Photojournalist Linda Solomon shows Tajee Barnes, 9, how to operate a disposable camera. She is on a 10-city tour in a program for underprivileged kids. Pictures they take will be made into greeting cards.

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