

Homeless children create holiday cards

by *Alex Bloom* - Oct. 12, 2008 08:10 PM
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Food. Family. Home. A chance to help people. Those are the hopes and dreams of children at Phoenix's Homeward Bound shelter. The children depicted those dreams in their own photography.

The work was unveiled Friday at Saturn of Scottsdale as part of "Pictures of Hope," a program that asks disadvantaged children to photograph things they hope for.

"This project gives these children a voice maybe for the first time where they can really share deep feelings," said Linda Solomon, the program's founder.

Greeting cards with their photos will be sold at the dealership during the holiday season with all profits to Homeward Bound to use for child programming.

A Tucson photographer, Solomon started the nationwide "Pictures of Hope" in 2005 through Salvation Army, with sponsorship from General Motors.

She since has taken the program to multiple shelters throughout the country.

"You don't see Nintendos or iPods (on the cards)," she said. "These images project life lessons and values for everyone in the community to really learn from."

Solomon taught techniques for three days in July as the Homeward Bound children took their own photos. The children, ranging in age from 7 to 13, saw their work for the first time on Friday.

The shelter assists families one to two years, helping them achieve economic independence, find safe, affordable housing and break multigenerational cycles of homelessness and domestic violence.

Dana Bailey, director of marketing communications and special events, said that Homeward Bound was excited to work with "Pictures of Hope" to help the shelter's children feel special and important and that the children were excited and motivated to take on the assignment.

"The difference between our kids at Homeward Bound and kind of average kids in the community is our kids don't always believe their hopes and dreams can come true because of experiences they've had up to that point so far in their life," Bailey said.

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Greeting cards will be sold for \$25 per package at Saturn of Scottsdale.

Dan Jonuska, a father and grandfather, is owner of the dealership. He said helping out with the photography program was a "no-brainer."

"These are kids who don't have a lot of opportunities that other kids have," he said. "Like my kids, for instance."

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