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Children take part in Pictures of Hope program

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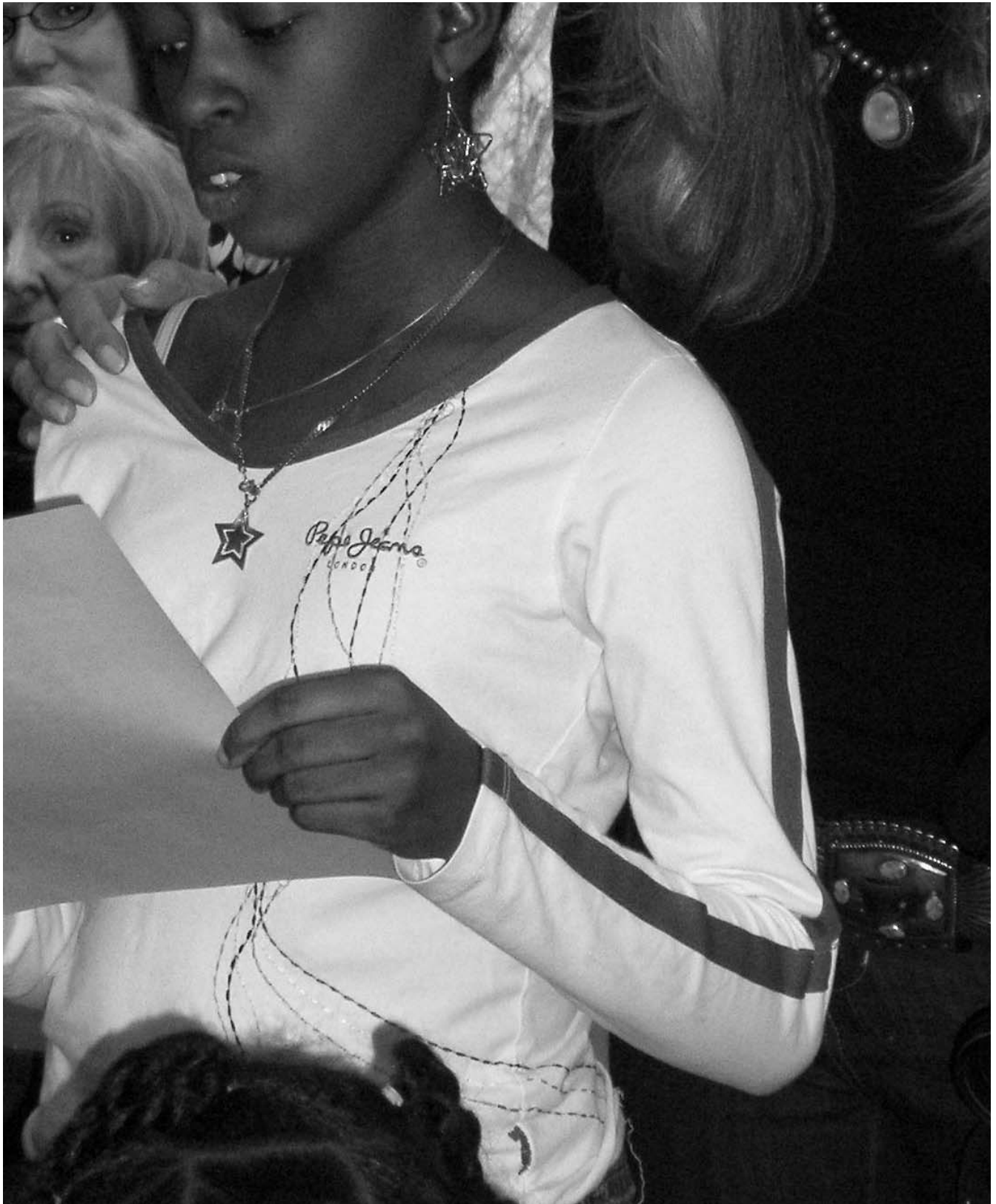


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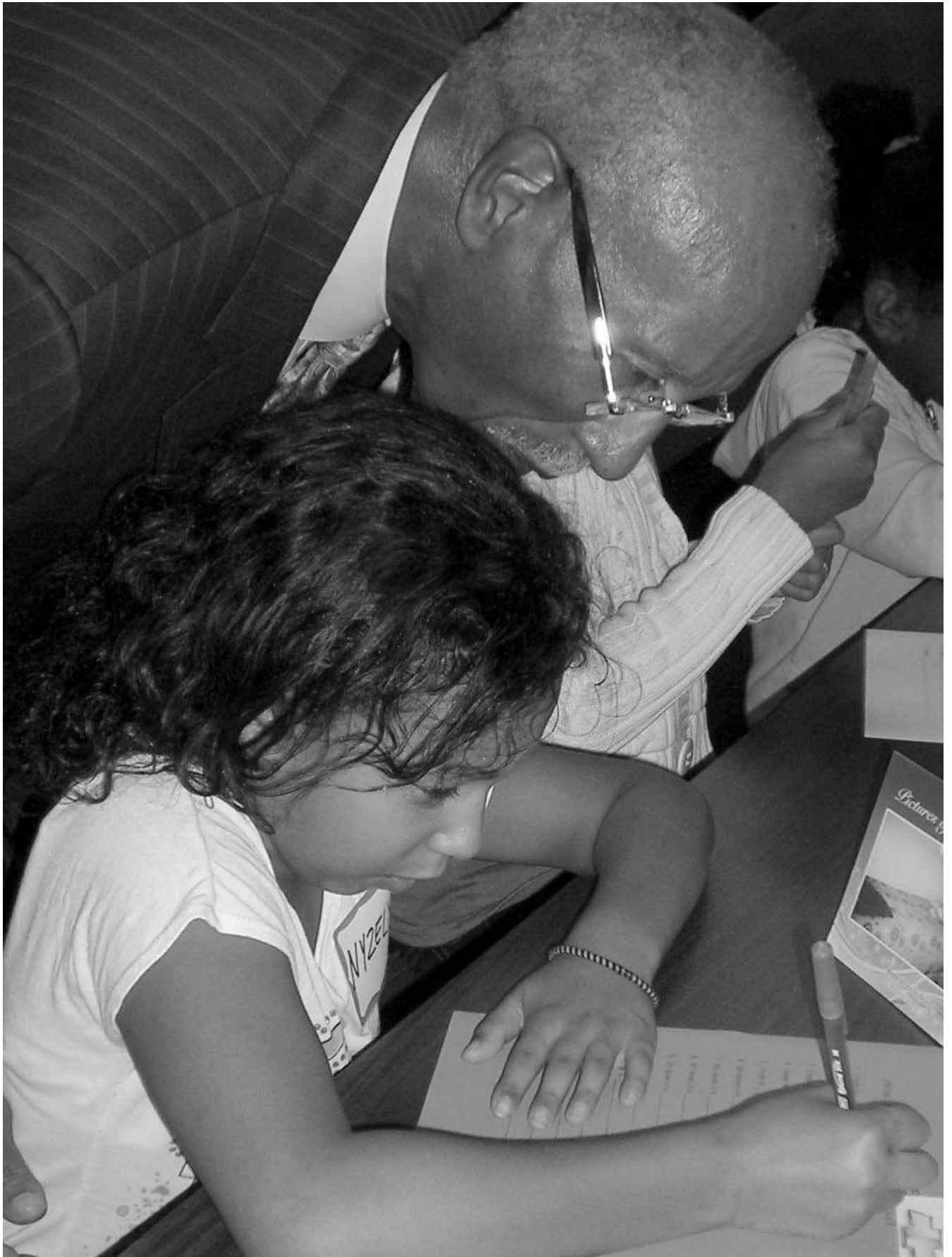
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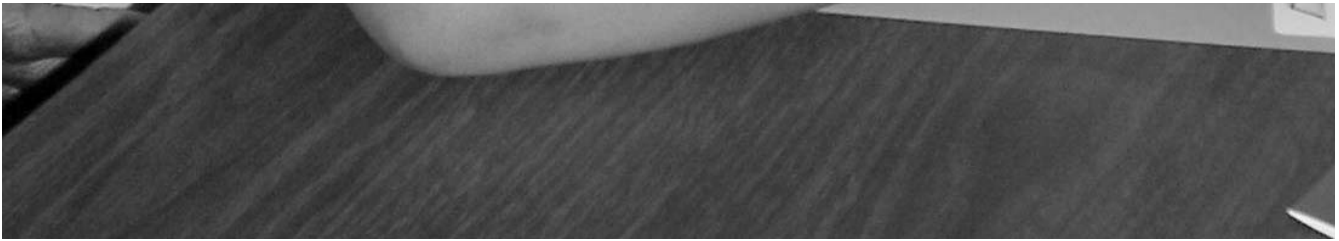




By DUSTIN BLITCHOK
Special to the Oakland Press







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DETROIT— “The opportunity you’re going to get today will stay with you for the rest of your life,” Detroit Mayor Dave Bing told children at a Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries shelter on Friday. The children were about to participate in photojournalist Linda Solomon’s program, Pictures of Hope.

“We’ve got tough days ahead of us. Because we have so many loving and caring people in this city, you’re going to get the support you need,” Bing said.

Solomon had the children, who were ages 7-12, make a list of their hopes and dreams, and then said their assignment was to “photograph all of the things that you are hoping and dreaming for.” The children’s pictures will be used on holiday greeting cards, and the proceeds from the cards will go to the Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries.

The Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries serve 3,500 meals per day and service 1,400 men, women, and children per day, said Karen Love, the non-profit’s vice-president of public relations. Love said that the organization has been in existence for 102 years.

Pictures of Hope, which is sponsored by the Chevrolet division of General Motors, will travel to 10 cities this year, with a dealership in each city representing Chevrolet. General Motors has sponsored the program for four years. Susan Ianni, the general manager of Gordon Chevrolet in Garden City, said that Pictures of Hope is a way that General Motors gives back to the community. “Where better to start than with children’s programs?” she said.

The group of children who participated in Friday’s Pictures of Hope program will go to Gordon Chevrolet during the Thanksgiving holiday season for a celebration, said Ianni. From Thanksgiving through Christmas, every Gordon Chevrolet customer who purchases a new car will be given a set of the greeting cards from Pictures of Hope, and the dealership will make matching donations to the Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries.

Solomon, who has been photographing the Academy Awards for 30 years, showed pictures she has taken at the Oscars. The children at Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries’ Genesis House II immediately recognized celebrities such as Beyoncé Knowles and Will Smith, and were especially thrilled when Miley Cyrus’s picture came up during the slideshow. Solomon used photos taken by her and by children in past Pictures of Hope programs to teach a basic photography lesson. She covered points such as how to hold a camera and how close a photographer should be to their subject.

“Their hopes and dreams are very unselfish; they express true values,” Solomon said of the homeless children that she works with. She continued, “they always hope for education, (which is) something that I think other children sometimes take for granted.” Solomon’s initiatives, including Pictures of Hope, have reached over one million children. Solomon, who lives in Bloomfield Township, was inducted this year into the Michigan Journalism Hall of Fame. Solomon said, “I realized that children can express things through photography that are often difficult to express verbally.”

Solomon said that in one instance, a homeless girl who participated in Pictures of Hope photographed the entrance to San Diego State University; the image expressed her dream of going to college. The college’s president saw the picture, and the girl was offered a four-year scholarship to the school. “One photo can change a life,” said Solomon.

The director of Michigan’s Department of Human Services, former state Supreme Court Justice Maura Corrigan, was at the event on Friday. She told Solomon, “I want to say, the greatest legacy you could give is the legacy you are creating here on Webb Street.”

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