

Solomon Shares 'Pictures of Hope' With Children

By Aisling Maki

Nationally recognized photojournalist and author [Linda Solomon](#) traveled to Memphis Tuesday, Sept. 18, to share her lifelong passion for photography and to encourage children from underprivileged backgrounds to follow their own hopes and dreams.

The children – ages 6 through 12 – gathered at the offices of Agape Child & Family Services at [111 Racine St.](#) for “Pictures of Hope,” which included a photography lesson, followed by a walking excursion through the neighborhood to capture photos representing their goals for the future.

“The most important thing is to grow their self-esteem, to show the children that their hopes and dreams matter and that they are respected,” said Solomon, who last year was inducted into the Michigan Journalism Hall of Fame and currently serves on the board of the Tennessee Arts Academy. “The whole goal of this program is to encourage these children to keep expressing what truly matters in life.”

The children who participated in Tuesday’s event are clients of nonprofit Agape’s FIT (Families in Transition) Program, which serves homeless mothers and their children in Shelby County, providing things such as safe stable housing, counseling and classes that include GED preparation life skills, job skills, computer literacy and financial literacy.

Self-sufficiency is the ultimate goal of the FIT program.

“Agape means love, and they definitely have shown me love,” said Agape FIT client [Monica Valentine](#), mother of a son and daughter who participated in Tuesday’s program.

Partnering with Chevrolet, Solomon has brought her “Pictures of Hope” program – featured in many media outlets, including “Oprah,” – to at-risk children living in shelters in cities that include San Antonio, Albuquerque, N.M., Tucson, Ariz., San Jose, Calif., and Orlando, Fla.

In each city, Solomon teams up with a local nonprofit. This was her second trip to Memphis; she previously visited with local children through the Salvation Army Memphis.

“I was honored to be selected to the board of the Tennessee Arts Academy, and I just think



Nationally recognized photojournalist Linda Solomon teaching photography to a child during the “Pictures of Hope” workshop at Agape Child & Family Services.

(Photo: Aisling Maki)

Memphis is a wonderful city,” Solomon said. “The people here give back to their communities. ... I’m honored to be able to do the program here.”

Solomon delivered a brief presentation about her work as a photojournalist, which includes three decades of covering the Academy Awards, and serving as photographer of the New York Times bestseller “People We Know, Horses They Love,” featuring photo essays on Robert Redford, [Morgan Freeman](#) and others.

The Memphis children made lists of their hopes and dreams, which they then shared with Solomon, Chuck Hutton Chevrolet president [Henry Hutton](#), and an audience of mentors, student volunteers from Memphis College of Art, and Agape staff members.

Those lists included goals such as seeing the ocean, making new friends, going to college, and becoming a teacher.

The children then were provided with a brief lesson in photography before each was given their own camera, heading out into the community to take their photos.

Stops included the Benjamin L. Hooks Central Library, East High School, and a variety of local businesses.

“I think it’s wonderful that these people took time out of their schedule to come out and introduce these kids to new ways – to remind them of their hopes and dreams,” Valentine said. “Being able to capture those hopes and dreams makes you work for it, so you can figure out exactly what you want in life.”

The images captured by the children will be transformed into holiday greeting cards, which will be sold through the Agape Child & Family Services.

All proceeds from the sale of the Pictures of Hope greeting cards will benefit the many families and children who receive services through Agape.

The children at Agape Child & Family Services will see their “Pictures of Hope” cards for the first time at a November “Meet the Young Artist” Reception at Chuck Hutton Chevrolet.

From Thanksgiving through Christmas, every customer who purchases a new Chevrolet from Chuck Hutton Chevrolet will receive Pictures of Hope greeting cards as a gift, and the car dealership will give a matching donation to Agape’s housing for homeless women and their children.

“When you give this card to someone you care about, you know you’re changing the life of someone in a very powerful way,” Solomon said.