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‘Pictures of Hope’ documents wishes of homeless children

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/ The Detroit News

Detroit — One child wished for a college education. Another hoped she'd someday become mayor. And a third said she wanted a home.

Those were some of the goals shared Friday by a group of homeless Detroit children selected to participate in the "Pictures of Hope" program.

The national program, sponsored by Chevrolet, was developed in 2006 by award-winning photojournalist and author Linda Solomon. Through her effort, Solomon visits children ages seven to 12 in 10 cities each year throughout the country, providing photography lessons and cameras for the children to capturing their hopes on film. Solomon later develops the film, transforming the photographs and the written dream of each child into holiday greeting cards.

"We're trying so hard to show these children that these hopes and dreams matter," said Solomon, a former Detroit News columnist. "I know one photo can change a life. I look at this project as one life at a time."

During Friday's program, the children, all of whom live at the Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries, also met and heard from Detroit Mayor Dave Bing and state Department of Human Services Director Maura D. Corrigan.

Nyzelyia, 9, expressed her dream of being a future leader in Detroit.

"My hope is to be mayor of Detroit," she wrote Friday on her list of hopes and dreams provided by Solomon.

"My dream is to help the city. My dream is to wish everybody hope."

The Pictures of Hope program has been featured on Oprah, CBS Evening News, ABC World News and in People Magazine, USA Today and other publications.

Solomon said several children who previously participated in the program have been awarded college scholarships and their families are no longer homeless.

Another Detroit girl in Friday's group, Tearsa, 11, wrote that she hoped to make a difference, work with children, have her own house, become a nurse and the first black female president.

"They feel special and proud and it builds self-esteem," said Solomon of Birmingham. "That's what this project does."

Greeting cards from the Detroit project, sponsored locally by Gordon Chevrolet, will be sold through the Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries and Gordon Chevrolet in Garden City. All Proceeds from the sale of the "Picture of Hope" greeting cards will benefit families and children who receive services at the mission.

In addition, every customer who buys a new Chevrolet at Gordon Chevrolet between Thanksgiving and Christmas will receive a set of cards and the dealership will make a matching donation to the shelter.

"When you give this card to someone you know you are truly making a difference," she said. "Every penny goes back."

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