

# OAKLAND PRESS

[Skip to Main Window](#)

## Pictures of Hope program awards scholarship



Left to right: Linda Schlesinger Wagner (from skinnytees), Deandra Franklin (Hope Scholar), Nancy Farris (skinnytees) as Deandra enjoys the skinnytees dogs -- more than the shopping spree!  
Photo by Honey Murray.

By Honey Murray

Posted: 10/07/16, 2:22 PM EDT | Updated: 2 days ago

[0 Comments](#)



Left to right: Nancy Farris (from skinnytees), Linda Schlesinger Wagner (from skinnytees), Deandra Franklin (Hope Scholar), Linda Solomon. Photo by Honey Murray.

Special to Digital First Media

[honeymurray@hotmail.com](mailto:honeymurray@hotmail.com)

For many area students, this has been the first semester start of a new school year. For college freshman Deandra Franklin, it's been the start of a new life, full of healing and exciting possibilities – made feasible by award-winning, Birmingham photojournalist Linda Solomon's Pictures of Hope program and a community of generous and caring supporters.

When personal trauma and family illness thwarted the college plans of the Westland honor student, Deandra's mom, Traquis Edwards, contacted popular WXYZ anchor Carolyn Clifford (host of "Against All Odds," a weekly segment highlighting local young people who overcome a negative situation and keep their dreams alive) and asked for help to keep alive her own daughter's dream of pursuing the education to become a veterinarian.

"I reached out to Pictures of Hope's Linda Solomon, believing that their Hope Scholarship program could help this talented young woman stay on track with her goals," said Clifford. "The results with Deandra – with all the bad stories we hear – make my job worthwhile."

### Pictures of Hope

Since 2005, Pictures of Hope has been helping some of the 2.5 million homeless children in 49 cities throughout the country. With thousands of cameras donated by Walgreen's, Solomon visits shelters, teaches the children there to use the cameras and sends them out to capture a photo that expresses their hopes and dreams.

"The pictures share feelings not easily expressed verbally," Solomon said, "and the children are empowered when the camera lets them see their dreams for a better life."

The photos become notecards sold through the shelters.

Smiling, Solomon recalls how one boy's photo of his dream (a new pair of shoes) prompted a donation of 250 pairs of shoes to his shelter.

“Individuals want to help whenever they learn of need,” Solomon said, “and are able to change the world, one person at a time.”

### Hope Scholarships

One individual who wanted to help, after seeing Solomon on NBC Nightly News, was Dr. John Comerford, president of Blackburn College in Carlinville, Illinois.

“These children, working towards their dreams, are the kind of students Blackburn College is meant to serve. With Linda Solomon, we created the Hope Scholarship – \$100,000 to cover four years – and we will provide five scholarships every year. I was extremely glad to welcome Deandra Franklin to our campus as a 2016 Hope Scholar.”

### Pictures of Hope ANGELS

Linda Schlesinger Wagner, nationally known fashion designer and owner of Skinnytees (headquartered in Birmingham and sold worldwide), gladly became one of Solomon's Pictures of Hope ANGELS and presented Deandra with an entire wardrobe and a mountain of dorm essentials.

“She is the most humble, polite, intelligent, sweet girl – and she's going to be in our lives forever,” said Schlesinger Wagner, who, with her general manager Nancy Farris, has already sent care packages to Deandra at Blackburn.

Kroger stores donated gift cards for Deandra's transportation costs and snacks.

### Hope for the world

As Deandra works on her Environmental Sciences major this fall, which will allow her to enter veterinary school, she shares some of what she's learned this semester about our world.

“Our resources are not finite! In addition to recycling, we need to use rain barrels, solar panels and all we can to lesson our carbon footprint and preserve the atmosphere.”

And she speaks of how her own world has changed. “I am really thankful. I don't know where I'd be if it wasn't for Linda, Carolyn, Linda and Nancy at Skinnytees, Dr. Comerford, and everyone who has helped me. I'm looking forward to helping animals, our environment, our community, our world.”

### SIDEBAR

To donate or to become a Pictures of Hope ANGEL: [lindasolomonphotography.com/PicturesofHope](http://lindasolomonphotography.com/PicturesofHope) Solomon hopes to raise funds for textbooks and for transportation costs for Hope Scholars

Blackburn College: [blackburn.edu](http://blackburn.edu) 800-233-3550

Skinnytees: [skinnytees.com](http://skinnytees.com)