

SHINING OVER CALIFORNIA'S GREAT CENTRAL VALLEY SINCE 1869

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Students examine community through photos

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The lens of a camera was the tool a group of Merced County young people recently used to pull back the curtain on important community issues, and examine how real people are affected.

And the results of their efforts are now on display.

"It's Not All Peaches and Cream Out There," a collection of photos taken by Golden Valley High School students during a documentary photo class, are part of an exhibit inside Study Central in the Merced College Student Union Building.

A grand opening reception for the exhibit is planned for 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday. The public



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Merced College students sit Monday morning at Study Central, surrounded by photos taken by Golden Valley High School students. A reception for the exhibit, which examines community issues, is set for Thursday afternoon.

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The project broadened Alyssa Castro's view on the homeless. Castro, who graduated from Golden Valley last spring, said the class showed her that homeless people have different needs. "Some homeless just need a little push, but other homeless are not emotionally stable," said the 19-year-old who's now mentoring other students in the class.

Wyan, the Venice Arts project manager, said the purpose of the classes is to teach photojournalism, and ultimately for young people to be able to tell vital stories in their community.

The classes "give youth a voice through photography

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For more information, email Roger Wyan at roger@venicearts.org.

and advocacy," he said. "We are trying to get youth to participate in their communities and take a hard look at the health issues that are important to them."

Maribel Torrez, 15, a sophomore at Golden Valley, said she thought homelessness was an important local issue, especially given the recession. "A lot of people are losing their jobs because of the economy," she

said.

Amanda Ya, 14, a sophomore at Golden Valley, said that from working on the project, she learned homeless people are just like everyone else. She also gained a deeper perspective about her surroundings. "It kind of opened my eyes to the kind of problems that we have in our community," she said.

Wyan said he wants to host community forums based on the issues the youth examined, and try to come up with solutions.

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CLASS

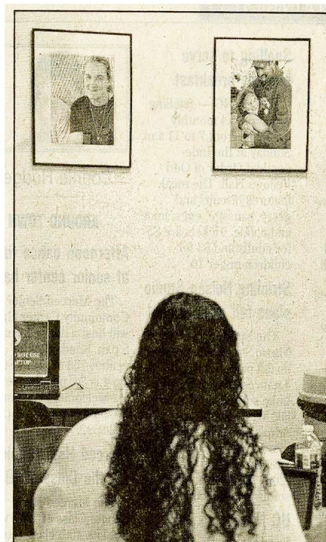
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is invited, and the photos will remain on display through Oct. 31.

The class, taught by local photographer Roger Wyan, tackled homelessness as one of the first projects. Venice Arts, an international youth media mentoring program, received a grant from the California Endowment to offer the classes as part of endowment's Building Healthy Communities Initiative. In the spring, it offered a class at Golden Valley High School and one at Le Grand High School.

It also held a summer class at the Merced County Office of Education, and this fall is conducting a class at Valley Community School.

As part of the class at Golden Valley, students spent hours photographing homeless people at the Merced County Rescue Mission and at the D Street Shelter. Students at the Le Grand class looked at the issue of child obesity, while students in the summer class examined youth substance abuse.



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Images from a documentary photo class are on display above Meagan Collier, 21, in Merced College's Study Central.