

Live Oak photo project highlights community

By JOEL HERSCH

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LIVE OAK -- At the 17th Avenue Studios on Thursday, children from Live Oak shared large-scale, black-and-white prints of community members' portraits taken as part of an international photography experiment called Inside Out Project.

The brainchild of the one-name French artist JR, winner of a \$100,000 prize from the prominent nonprofit TED, the project calls on people around the world to snap black-and-white portraits to discover and share something about where they live. The images can be digitally uploaded to JR's website, and he makes large prints and sends them back to photographers to exhibit in their communities.

At the event, the posters were set up outside the studios, where about 50 people enjoyed snacks and pointed out faces they recognized.

One photo of an elderly Latino man, taken by Nicholas Gonzalez, 13, was printed out to be about 12 by 8 feet and covered the majority of one wall.

"We call him the Superman," said 13-year-old Shoreline Middle student Casey Sustaitapaz. "Nicholas took that picture right outside the supermarket down the street called Super."

Some of the other photos can be seen on the walls of the market, Live Oak Super, on the corner of 17th Avenue and Brommer Street.

Mariah Roberts, a volunteer at the Community Bridges Live Oak Family Resource Center, contacted JR on his site and signed up to have the kids she works with be a part of the project,

she said.

"It's been really great," said

Sustaitapaz, one of 11 kids involved. "We've gotten to learn a lot about our urban community. It's pretty run-down, and this is a cool way to make it a little bit nicer."

Sustaitapaz said the project has gotten him interested in doing more art work related to urban community.

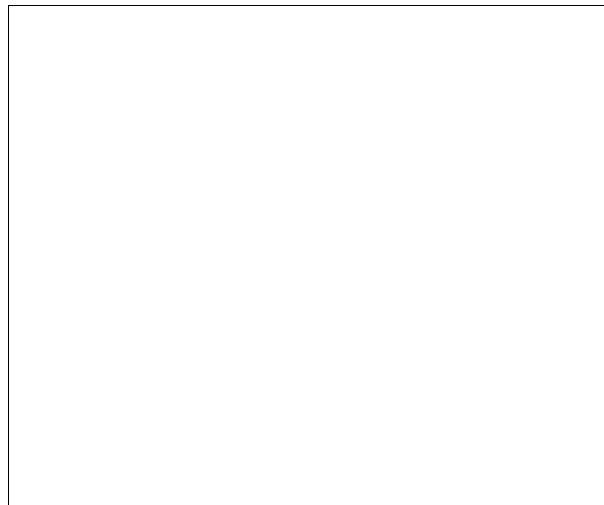
"Unfortunately," he said, "the photos aren't permanent."

The poster material JR uses for printing are made from biodegradable materials, so they dissolve in the rain, Roberts said.

JR also instructs participants how to make their own paste to stick the posters up on walls using a mixture of flour, sugar and water, she said.

"Those ingredients are much more accessible for people all over the world and a lot cheaper than glue," Roberts explained.

Before the kids started shooting photos, local photographer Joop Rubens gave them a tutorial on what kinds of shots they should aim for and



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provided some photo examples. The theme for their project was defining community identity and poking fun at stereotypes.

"The kids really lit up doing this," Roberts said. "It's really given them a lot of enthusiasm for their community and they've been meeting people who they never would have met otherwise."

Dyana Aquilera, 13, a student at Mission Hill Middle School, learned about the project through her mom and wanted to be involved.

"I really like being a part of something so big," she said.

Greg Stein, principal of Shoreline Middle School, also attended the event and said he was interested in setting up a similar program at his school.

"The bottom line is Live Oak needs some beautification," Stein said, "and this is something that would really bring a lot of flavor and life to the neighborhood."

To apply for the Inside Out Project, visit www.insideoutproject.net.



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