



World AIDS Day As Seen By Children

Written By Jennifer Ryan

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World AIDS Day is Wednesday.

This year, instead of sharing stories with professional photos and flashy video essays, one man is encouraging children to share their experience with a single snapshot.

Those pictures are now here in Washington.

Jennifer Ryan shows you the extraordinary impact the photos are having for people touched by AIDS.

Jennifer Ryan's report

The images are black and white, but look deeper and the stories and the subjects are far more complex.

In a fleeting glance the camera catches this image. It's not of a child struggling, but an old tire behind her, appearing as angels wings and above her head, a discarded straw basket. It makes a perfect halo.

There is AIDS in Africa, Indian, Mexico and Romania, all photographed by children. Some of them are the 14 million left orphaned by AIDS. Yet, in each snapshot, there is hope.

"You see all of them happy, they don't send the effect that I'm sad", says Alex, a 16-year old HIV patient from Romania.

He is one of the 150 children from 5 countries given a \$15 dollar camera, a journal and week's worth of lessons and counseling to learn, for the first time, how to share their feelings about AIDS.

The Picturing Hope Project is now here in Washington. The man behind it is Craig Bender.

Henri, a participant says the project has brought him and his friends closer.

"It helps express some anxiety about HIV for example and those kinds of issues", he says. They are issues and feelings that some children have never been allowed to share.

"Their parents didn't want them to know because it's a serious problem", says Alex.

The 150 children will now become peer educators and teach the next groups of school children on how to share their experiences through pictures.

The money made from selling those pictures, cards, and calendars will go to help the villages

and communities, where the young photographers live.

You can meet some of the young photographers at the exhibit. It's at the U.S. Senate Rayburn Building in DC through Tuesday.

Facts about DC area's fight against AIDS

Doctors at Whitman Walker Clinic estimate that 1 in 20 adults in the Washington area is HIV positive.

Also, doctors say one in three don't know they have it.

New cases of HIV in are area are growing at 10 times the national average.

Whitman Walker hopes to break that trend by unveiling there mobil HIV testing units, Tuesday morning.

Click on video to see Jennifer Ryan's report.