

Lenses focus on New Orleans today

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Glenda Cauble's class last semester, and found out they would be taking the trip then. They've been preparing for the trip, from a photography perspective, with the Teaching Artist from the Light Factory, Jen Crickenberger. "I looked at their work individually and asked them what they were most proud of," explained Crickenberger. "I examined their strengths...pushed them to work toward their strengths. Some of them have already made work that could be used for the final part."

Crickenberger has been working with the students since late October and said although there's been improvement she expects their work from New Orleans to really stand out. "All your emotions are brought to the surface in photographs," she said.

As first-time visitors the artist and the students from Harding expect this to be a very emotional trip. On Tuesday they began filming and photographing in the Ninth Ward area of New Orleans, one of the communities most decimated by Hurricane Katrina. They are touring specifically the destroyed homes of the kids they are working with. They will spend time with these students getting to know their personal stories. In addition to their assignment the students will be volunteering with the Phoenix Group, to lend a hand to the rebuilding efforts in mid-city New Orleans. They'll tour the Tulane University art gallery, and photograph and film the historic St. Louis cathedral and cemetery. They will also get an opportunity to try the legendary "King Cake" of New Orleans, and even experience the Excalibur Parade on Metairie Rd before leaving on Friday, as Mardi Gras celebrations begin in New Orleans.

"It's not gonna be a fun trip the whole time," explained Crickenberger, "It's going to be educational, it's going to be emotional...it's going to be interesting. We wanted them to be prepared and realize they are not going as detached tourists, they are going to understand and give

back." Not everyone was onboard with the project, though. Crickenberger explained that many of the schools in New Orleans were not interested because they said they were "Katrina-ed out and...moving on." The students that are participating, she said, "are excited to share their stories and for the students of Charlotte to understand what they went through."

In preparation for their trip, the students had a variety of guest speakers, experts in, ecology, geology, and the socio-political history of the Gulf-Coast region. They also prepared by viewing documentaries, including Spike Lee's HBO documentary "When the Levees Broke" A Requiem in Four Acts.

Chris Abernathy, a senior at Harding, felt the tone of all the documentaries was very sad, but hopes to be able to show more than the sadness through his photos.

"I want to focus on the reconstruction involved with the schools," said Abernathy. "I want to show kids playing...life after the situation. They're still living, down there, and it is still a very inspiring story."

Abernathy also hopes to be able to capture the spontaneous spirit of Mardi Gras. "Though each of the students is nervous and excited about the opportunity, none of them had any clue what they might feel after being there 4 days."

"The students seem to feel detached from this," said Crickenberger. "As tragic as Spike Lee's documentary is, it's still distant...still experienced through the TV. They are aware and sensitive that these people have gone through so much. We've explained to them that they are not going to attack them with the cameras, they want to go in and learn and understand."

Since November, both New Orleans and Charlotte students have watched and critiqued Katrina media coverage. New Orleans students have also learned, from fine art photographer and New Orleans resident Carl Bergman, how to create conceptual images that communicate their ideas

and feelings about the devastation and recovery from Hurricane Katrina.

"The ultimate goal of this project is to give students an opportunity to express and discuss the issues of tragedy and rebuilding through photography and film," said Marcie Kelso, executive director for The Light Factory. "The 'power of image' is not confined to what we all felt watching the news coverage of this terrible event."

The name of the exhibit, Message in a Bottle: Reconstructing Lives, is taken from a portion of the students' finished installa-

tion. Students from Charlotte and New Orleans will individually look for and find bottles in the Gulf Coast area and use these bottles as containers for creatively expressing a "call for help."

"Message in a Bottle: Reconstructing Lives" is scheduled to debut at the Creative Arts Center in New Orleans on May 12. The exhibit will open at The Light Factory's Middleton McMillan Gallery on July 27. More information about the project is available by calling 704-333-9755 or logging onto www.lightfactory.org.



PHOTO/ERICA SINGLETON

Jen Crickenberger from The Light Factory discusses what photographers from Harding High School should take to New Orleans.

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Vitamin D key to good health

SPECIAL TO THE POST

With decreased sunlight and increased clothing layers during winter, all women and primarily African-American women can have a more difficult time getting enough vitamin D, a key nutrient that plays a critical role in reducing the risks of osteoporosis and hip fractures.

"During this time of year, fewer hours of sunlight are available and less skin is exposed, making it more challenging for African-American women - who are already at heightened risks for vitamin D deficiency year-round - to get adequate levels of the 'sunshine' vitamin," says Dr. Michael Thomas Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the Director of the Division of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center. "It's important for them to take the right kind of supplement to help prevent vitamin D deficiency and maintain their health."

The high melanin content in darker skin reduces the skin's ability to produce vitamin D from sunlight. Experts note that people with darker skin may need 20 to 30 times as much exposure to sunlight as fair-skinned individuals to generate the same levels of

vitamin D.

A variety of other factors can also cause vitamin D deficiency in African-American women, such as inadequate intake of the nutrient through regular diet. Studies confirm that African-Americans consume the lowest amounts of vitamin D from food alone among different ethnicities.

"But vitamin D is only one component of this health equation for African-American women," Dr. Thomas says. "Research has found that calcium is an essential complement to vitamin D for ideal protection of the bones and the body."

But more than 75 percent of Americans are not meeting the current calcium intake recommendation - and as many as 75 percent of African-Americans are lactose intolerant, according to the National Institutes of Health, possibly further limiting the consumption of calcium and vitamin D-fortified dairy products.

Seventy percent of all women ages 51-70 - and nearly 90 percent of women older than 70 - aren't getting enough vitamin D from food and supplements. And nearly two-thirds of African-American women mistakenly believe they are getting enough of this key nutrient.

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