

Community in focus

Teens' photo project reaps revealing images

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ALHAMBRA - Twelve teenagers were sent out into their communities earlier this year with the mission to visually record the world around them.

For 10 weeks, beginning in January, the San Gabriel High School students took thousands of photographs. They combed the streets of San Gabriel and Alhambra for subjects - from members of their own families to pedestrians on the streets to people eating in restaurants and more.

This week, two photos from each of the teens were unveiled inside the high school's library, where they will be displayed.

"I used to walk by without noticing things, but it made me appreciate my community more," said Dong Liu, 18, one of the students who participated in the "Picture This" program.

For the program, the school partnered with the Chinese American Museum in Los Angeles, which is preparing to host an exhibit of work by famed photographer Corky Lee, said Pauline Wong, the museum's executive director.

Because Lee's photographs are of the East Coast, museum officials wanted to feature photos representing the West Coast as well, Wong said.

"He (Lee) inspired us to think about how we could do a local component," she said. "We felt the youth would have an honest opinion of their community."

Each of the 12 students eventually selected for the program received a camera and a basic course in photography from instructors from the museum and from the Venice Arts: In Neighborhoods art center.

The students range from freshman to seniors, but all had some prior interest in photography, officials said.

On Wednesday, the school held a reception for the students and unveiled their pictures in the library. But their photos - which include a shot of a man jaywalking and a cashier inspecting a \$100 bill, among many other images - also will be included in the Corky Lee exhibit coming to the Chinese American Museum in November, officials said.

"I learned more about my community," said Mary Le, 18, a senior, who submitted one photo in the display showing her grandmother.

"We learned how to take pictures professionally and learned about our community," said Carlos Luna, 16, a sophomore.

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