



FOTO FEST

PRESS RELEASE

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Bruce T., 2nd Grade, Neff Elementary

Houston-area Students Showcase Writing and Photography at FotoFest Exhibit

FotoFence 2009

May 11-20, 2009

FotoFest , 1113 Vine Street, Houston, Texas 77002

(HOUSTON, APRIL 20, 2009) – FotoFest’s **Literacy Through Photography** educational program presents **FotoFence 2009**, the annual exhibition of student work at the conclusion of the 2008-2009 school year. The FotoFence exhibit is on view at FotoFest, **1113 Vine Street** in Downtown Houston, beginning May 11, 2009. A public family-oriented reception takes place **Sunday, May 17, 2-4pm**.

FotoFence is the year-end project of FotoFest’s **Literacy Through Photography (LTP)** education program, designed to help young people achieve better communication and writing skills through the stimulus of photography. LTP has operated in Houston-area schools since 1990, and has been taught to over 25,000 students. The FotoFence 2009 exhibit features over **500 posters from 18 area schools and 55 elementary, middle and high school classrooms**. Students’ writing and photography frame the experiences from their own lives, their families, communities, dreams, as well as social issues like global warming, immigration, neighborhood violence, cruelty to animals and teen pregnancy. As part of the May 17 reception for FotoFence 2009, students will read from their writings:

*Will I forget the fifth grade party? Will I forget my best friends? Will I forget my old school?
I hope it is yes, because they know nothing.*

*I hope I can go to the University of Saudi Arabia or University of Germany. Or University of France
or the University of Nigeria. Or University of China. Or the University of—everywhere!
I hope I don't forget Herod, because they know something.*

Lehlumeh, Fifth Grade, Herod Elementary School
WITS/LTP project, taught by Marjorie Gere and Julie Alexander

Literacy Through Photography provides specially designed lesson plans centered around four themes; *SELF, FAMILY, COMMUNITY, and DREAMS*. Photographs serve as a catalyst for writing. By writing about their own photographs and their own lives, with confidence, students increase visual and verbal literacy skills while building cognitive thinking skills, self-esteem, and community awareness. LTP lessons are correlated to goals set forth in national curriculum mandates of *No Child Left Behind*, the National Council of Teachers of English *Standards for the English Language Arts* and the Texas Education Agency's *Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills For English Language Arts* for students in third to twelfth grades.

Classroom teachers and school administrators recognize the difference LTP has made in their schools.

I think it critical to continue to bridge school life with the real world. I believe when children are able to have these kind of valuable experiences it enriches the academic experience greatly. ...I love the idea of layering critical thinking with the more creative aspect of ourselves. Research has shown that children not only respond more openly to this kind of learning, but it is retained.

William A. Johnson, Assistant Principal
Herod Elementary.

With Literacy Through Photography, FotoFest has developed a number of special partnerships, including a new year-long, school-wide collaboration project, "Hooray for Neff" with **HGOco, the Houston Grand Opera's education and community collaboration department**, and **Pat Neff Elementary School**. The Neff Community project includes a series of writing, visual and performing arts activities by Neff students and teachers. The entire second and fifth grade classes at Neff Elementary are completing these projects using LTP techniques.

Among four other special LTP partnerships made possible by the William Stamps Farish Fund, is **Writers in the Schools (WITS)** at **Herod Elementary School** and **Lanier Middle School** in Houston. WITS is an Houston non-profit organization that focuses on at-risk inner city students to engage them "in the pleasure and power of reading and writing... to help students develop their creative and analytical thinking skills."

Literacy Through Photography is also part of the teaching program at **KIPP Shine Prep** in Southwest Houston, the first early education and elementary charter school opened by KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) in the U.S., During the 2008-2009 school year, 113 students; the entire third grade class; have been using LTP in their excellence classes on Friday.

A third LTP partnership is with **The Chinquapin School**, where three teachers have taken up the LTP curriculum. It is being used in a variety of classes including Advanced Placement English, Creative Media, photo-blogging with 10th grade students, and all 8th grade students. Featured at the FotoFence exhibit will be a number of posters created during Chinquapin's Creativity Week Project as "Photography for Social Progress."

Just as a photographer conveys ideas with pictures, a writer conveys ideas by illustrating and painting a picture with words in a readers mind... Writers have the choice of how they paint a picture depending on their word choice and how they chose to describe a situation."

Chinquapin student using LTP

The LTP partnership with **East Early College High School** has expanded the LTP program this year to include regular visits from professional photographers, the use of new technologies with photography, and tours to the FotoFest gallery.

FotoFence 2009, the annual exhibition of student writing and photography from the Literacy Through Photography education program runs **May 11 – 20, 2009 at FotoFest, 1113 Vine Street in Downtown Houston, Texas**. The exhibit is free and open to the public Monday – Friday 10am-5pm and Saturday noon-5pm. A free, public, family-oriented reception for students, families and teachers takes place **May 17, 2009, 2-4pm**.

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For more information on LITERACY THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY, please contact:
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LTP SPONSORS 2008-2009

The Williams Stamps; Farish Fund; The Arete Foundation; FotoFest Board of Directors; JP Morgan Chase; H-E-B Tournament of Champions; Crawford Family Donor – Advised Fund of the Foundation for Southeast Texas; The Brown Foundation, Inc.; Intermarine LLC; Nancy Powell Moore; Sherry and Jim Kempner; Contributors to FotoFun 2009

EDUCATION PARTNERS

Writers in the Schools (WITS); Project Grad; HGOCO, the Houston Grand Opera Education and Community Collaboration Department; The Chinquapin School; KIPP Shine Prep; East Early College High School

2008-2009 LITERACY THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Archway Academy, Houston; Cullen Middle School*, Houston; East Early College High School*, Houston; Eisenhower Middle School*, Wykoff, NJ; Furr High School*, Houston; George I. Sanchez High School*, Houston; Helms Elementary*, Houston; Herod Elementary* (WITS), Houston; Jackson Intermediate*, Pasadena; KIPP Academy Middle School, Houston; KIPP Shine Prep*, Houston; Lanier Middle School* (WITS), Houston; Memorial Drive Elementary*, Houston; Miller Intermediate School*, Pasadena; Patt Neff Elementary* (HGOCO), Houston; Raul Yzaguirre School for Success*, Houston; Sinclair Elementary*, Houston; Spring Branch Elementary*, Houston; Spring Woods High School*, Houston; The Chinquapin School*, Highlands; The Parish School*, Houston; The Pro-Vision School, Houston; The Rhodes School*, Houston; Velazquez Elementary, Richmond

* FotoFence 2009 featured schools



Bianca E., 2nd Grade, Neff Elementary.