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Public Policy Research Center at UMSL opens new photo show by Vashon students

Special to the American

"Mama."

"That's my baby."

These are powerful, almost magical words.

The good folks at the University of Missouri-St. Louis' Public Policy Research Center recognize that.

As the latest installment in its ongoing Photography Project, student-mothers at Vashon High School were asked to focused the cameras on their interaction with their children.

The student-mothers who participated are part of the Parent Infant Interaction Program, which was created as a way to keep teenage parents in school. The program offers early childhood education to the students' children and early childhood development classes to the parents.

After 20 years of service, PIIP remains the only center of its kind in St. Louis.

Instructor Lois Ingrum taught photography to nine Vashon students in the program. The students then honed their new skills by taking parent-child portraits and documenting what they learned at PIIP.

"Pregnancy is a tough road for any teen," said Mel Watkin, director of the PPRC Photography Project at UMSL.

"Parenting teens have to grow up fast and learn to pursue their lives, mostly as single moms. PIIP teaches them to finish school, and to have career goals and personal dreams."

"Parent Infant Interaction Program," an exhibit of the Vashon High School students' photos, will be on display April 7 through May 24 in the PPRC Photography Project Gallery, which is on the third floor of UMSL's Social Sciences and Business Building. Gallery hours are 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily. An opening reception will be held from noon to 1 p.m. April 7 in the gallery.

A duplicate of each PPRC Photography Project exhibit also is displayed in the neighborhood in which the photographs were taken.

In addition to UMSL, "Parent Infant Interaction Program" will be on display March 31 through May 11 at St. Louis Public Library's Schlafly Branch, 225 N. Euclid Ave. Exhibit hours are 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays; and 1 to 5 p.m. Sundays. An opening reception will be held from 5:30 to 7 p.m. March 31 at the library.

The PPRC Photography Project was modeled after the pioneering community photography programs established by artist and teacher Wendy Ewald. Several volunteer St. Louis-area community groups participate in the PPRC Photography Project each year. They learn the basics of photography and then are asked to document efforts to improve their neighborhood's quality of life.

The Public Policy Research Center's goal for the project is twofold: to highlight the undertakings of local organizations working toward the greater good and to inspire people to take a closer look at and get involved with their communities.

Visit <http://pprc.umsl.edu> or call 314-516-5273 for more information.



"In My Shadow" by Victory Riggins is one of several photos on display at UMSL (April 7-May 24) and St. Louis Public Library's Schlafly Branch (through May 11).

-- CLOSE WINDOW --