Exhibit at UMSL takes teens from war trauma to neighborhood pride

By American staff

With the homicide rates and routine experience of expression and violence in our city's most dangerous neighborhoods, a great many local youth could qualify as survivors of torture and trauma.

However, there is a program in St. Louis the Center for Survivors of Torture and War Trauma which deals directly with immigrant youth who have personally experienced some of these precise horrors in their home countries.

Some of these youth recently participated in the Public Policy Research Center Photography Project at UMSL, which teaches the basics of photography to people affiliated with local organizations, and then puts cameras in their hands to document themselves and their surroundings.

In this project, she students took pictures in Tower Grove Park, during a scavenger hunt in the Forest Park Southeast neighborhood, and of their home lives and neighborhoods.

The resulting photos which show the pride the students take in themselves, their families and their multicultural identities are going on display at UMSL and at a coffee shop across the street from the park where they scavenged for fun and photos.

The exhibit "Point-of-View: Center for Survivors of Torture and War Trauma" will open with a reception from noon to 1 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 4 in the PPRC (362 Social Sciences & Business Building on the UMSL campus).

Another opening reception will be held from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 18 at MoKaBe's, 3606 Arsenal St.

Both opening receptions will feature talks with staff from the PPRC Photography Project at UMSL and the Center for Survivors of Torture and War Trauma.

The Center for Survivors of Torture and War Trauma was created by St. Louis therapists who noticed a local increase in refugees suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. An informal coalition of service providers formed to work with clients from Afghanistan, Bosnia, Congo, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Liberia, Vietnam and other countries experiencing unrest.

The exhibit at PPRC runs Nov. 4 through Jan. 18, 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday through Friday. The exhibit at MoKaBe's runs Nov. 18 through Dec. 30, 8 a.m. to midnight Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to midnight Sundays.

The receptions and exhibits are free and open to the public. For more info, call 314-516-5273 or visit http://pprc.umsl.edu.