



Manhattanville Houses residents were given disposable cameras & a mission to document their daily lives in pictures. On r., a baby hugs her mom; below, families enjoying meals. Top, a preteen captures her friends at prayer & (above) a look at the development. Photos courtesy of NYCHA



GLIMPSE INTO THEIR LIVES

BY TUAN NGUYEN
NYCITY NEWS SERVICE

A MOTHER laughing with her daughter. Kids praying. A school principal at work.

The intimate glimpses of life in the Manhattanville Houses were captured in pictures snapped by residents as part of a new program created by the former transit official who helped to introduce the MetroCard to New York.

Young people and seniors who live in the sprawling complex were given disposable cameras and training in photography, with a charge to document their daily lives in pictures.

Some of the photos were recently uploaded to a newly built website (<http://www.studionycha.org/developinglives/>), the first installment in the New York City

Housing Authority's "Developing Lives" program, part of an ambitious bid by the agency to change the image of people living in housing developments.

"Grassroots" photography gives participants the means to express their challenges, hopes, fears and dreams more directly," said George Carrano, once the driving force behind the move from the token to the MetroCard a decade ago.

Carrano, who is volunteering his time to manage the pilot program he created, started the project in Manhattanville in early November, targeting three groups: preteens, teens and seniors.

He hopes the pictures will be exhibited in community centers, museums and galleries as a way for the public to have a truer

image of life in the communities that many New Yorkers just know as "the projects."

"Almost 8% of New Yorkers live in public housing," Carrano noted. "That's more than the population of Boston."

Housing development residents, Carrano argues, are among "the least visible citizens" of the city.

Aaliyah Colon, 12, said teacher Chelsea Davis taught her to take pictures from far and near. "I love taking pictures of my family and my friends," Aaliyah said. "It shows who I am and what I do. People can know about my family."

Carrano said NYCHA has approved the expansion of Developing Lives to two other housing developments, in the Bronx and in Brooklyn, beginning late March.