

Life

## 'New Beginnings' through pictures

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By JEN ANESI Special to The Oakland Press

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Last summer, a small group of women participating in the JVS Women to Work Program spent an afternoon learning photography basics from award-winning photojournalist and Birmingham native Linda Solomon.

The women were out-of-work administrative assistants, counselors, bank workers, caretakers, teachers and child care workers. They were not professional photographers and some had never even attempted to take quality photographs before, but it didn't matter.

Solomon's instructions were simple: Capture new beginnings on film.

The participants spent the next few months filling up their disposable cameras with images they felt represented new beginnings.

Christine Hyland captured an image of a pyramid of discarded, rolled carpet pieces stacked neatly on her neighbor's curb, saying you had to get rid of the old stuff to start new. Camille Stawarz photographed her cousin's grandson crossing a bridge. Suzy Brickner Friedman snapped a photo of a rusty old mannequin torso amidst plants in a green garden.

Each image, nine all together, was as individual as the woman who captured it.

The photographs debuted Thursday afternoon to rave reviews from attendees at JVS in Southfield and will go on public display at the JVS Trade Secrets dinner on March 18.

"I can't believe that this was captured with just a throwaway camera," said Barbara Biggs, standing in front her photograph. "Just a disposable. I love it."

Biggs, who has a degree in human services and hopes to find work as a counselor, had photographed a large fountain on a summer day. She said the water was cleansing and refreshing to her, symbolizing the ability to start fresh.

Nearby, Ivy Williams' light-hearted photograph of a "Wrong Way" sign is accompanied by her quote: "I find myself saying, 'I need a sign to know I'm going in the right direction.'"

Solomon's assignment was designed to be inspiring and empowering to the women in the program, who were all actively seeking employment. Some had lost their jobs, some were returning to work after a life-changing event that necessitated their re-entry into the workforce, and some were looking for work because their spouses had lost jobs.

Solomon, who has photographed numerous celebrities, authored four books and has her work included in the collections of Elizabeth Taylor and many others, has a long history of giving back to her community.

"For me it's a much greater sense of satisfaction to see someone else's work than my own, someone I've taught," said Solomon. "When you see these images, they're very journalistic. ... They did an amazing job."

The nine photographs will be available for purchase as prints and on note cards at the Trade Secret dinner. The proceeds will benefit the JVS Women to Work Program.

FYI

The "New Beginnings" photographs will be publicly displayed at the JVS Trade Secrets dinner in the Townsend Hotel in Birmingham at 6 p.m. March 18. Tickets are \$125. Nationally recognized photojournalist and celebrity photographer Linda Solomon will speak and present the 2010 Women to Work Award during the dinner. For more information, call Sharon Snyder, JVS chief development officer, at 248-233-4290 or visit [www.jvsdet.org](http://www.jvsdet.org) for more information.

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