

McGivney School Under Mary Campbell Work with 'Memory Project,' Create Portraits of Children in Malaysia

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GLEN CARBON - Art II students from Father McGivney Catholic High School (under the direction of Mrs. Mary Campbell) have been working with an organization called the “Memory Project” for the past three years (2017, 2018 and 2019). This year they created portraits for children in Malaysia who are refugees from MyanMar hoping to escape violence and persecution.

The “Memory Project” was founded by Ben Schumaker in 2004 while he was studying psychology at the University of Wisconsin. Ben spent a month at an orphanage in Guatemala where he learned that the children had few special belongings to help capture their life stories. Because Ben had always enjoyed creating portraits for friends and family in school art classes, he had the idea to organize art teachers and their students to create portraits that could serve as positive and tangible childhood “memories” for the children. Once he started delivering these portraits to children around the world, he realized that they also helped to build feelings of international friendship and solidarity. The portraits seemed to make the world a little smaller and kinder, and that is what the Memory Project is all about. Since 2004, participants in the Memory Project have created more than 130,000 portraits for children in 47 countries

Mary Campbell, Art Teacher for Father McGivney explains, “The Memory Project is a charitable nonprofit organization that invites art teachers, art students, and solo artists to help cultivate global kindness by creating portraits for children around the world who have faced substantial challenges, such as violence, war, extreme poverty, neglect, and loss of parents. The participants create these portraits to help children feel valued and important, to know that many people care about their well-being, and to provide a special childhood memory in the future.”

By facilitating the creation and delivery of heartfelt artwork and poetry made by children for children, they strive to break cultural barriers, leave children with a unique childhood memory, inspire creativity, show children living in difficult situations that they are valued, and cultivate a kinder world. This project empowers teachers and students in their pursuit of the same goals.

In addition to the portraits, Father McGivney students organized a Dress Down Day on Nov. 22nd benefiting the “Memory Project.” McGivney was proud to be able to send a check to the Memory Project in the amount of \$1095.00. This was the amount raised from the Nov. 22nd Dress down Day (students donate money to participate in the dress down day). Father McGivney principal, Joseph Lombardi, states “Service is a major part of our mission at Father McGivney Catholic High School. Our students regularly serve our school and our local community but participation in the Memory Project allows McGivney students to positively impact individuals on an international level. Regardless of the differences between our students and the children positively impacted by the Memory Project, this type of service reminds our students that the smallest act of kindness can bring joy to a person's life.”

Each year, the organization sends a video showing when the young people in these impoverished countries receive their very own images drawn by our students and thousands of other students around the country.

Here are those videos:

2019-2020 School Year – Memory Project – Malaysia

<https://vimeo.com/402225080/20bc2e30cc>

2018-2019 School Year - Memory Project - Philippines

<https://vimeo.com/327050822>

2017-2018 School Year – Memory Project – Syria <https://memoryproject.app.box.com/v/MaryCampbell/file/283774363707>

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