



## Memory project brings joy to less fortunate

By Danielle Gillette

For the past few weeks, six students in Mrs. Koblents' art classes have been working on a different kind of extra credit project. These juniors, seniors and sophomores have each created their own work based on a photograph of a child sent to them through the Memory Project.

The Memory Project's website describes it as, "a unique initiative in which art students create portraits for children and teens around the world that have been orphaned, neglected, or disadvantaged." The artists can use whatever media they want—pencil, paint, etc., to produce a portrait which will be delivered to the child in their photo.

The Memory Project was born in the fall of 2004 by Ben Schumaker, a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin at the time. Since then, youth from the United States and Canada have created more than 25,000 portraits for children in over thirty countries all around the world. Generally, each child in the program receives about two portraits, each crafted by different participants, which provide the child with a small collection celebrating his or her unique identity. (Thus, the number of children who have received portraits through the project is roughly half of the number produced.)

More often than not these kids have very few possessions to call their own; therefore the portrait is meant to provide them each with a special memory of their youth. Its purpose is to encourage them to embrace their own identity, to honor their heritage, and to promote a positive sense of self. The goal is not only to bestow them with something special to cherish, but also to help them see themselves as a work of art.

The project is not only beneficial for the subject of the portrait, though, it is a chance to connect American youth with kids from other countries in a meaningful exchange. For the art students who make the compositions this is an opportunity to open their hearts to youth who may have endured more hardships than they can conceive. The endeavor inspires global friendship and promotes the value of sharing kindness with others.



Bodley art students are taking part in "the Memory Project," creating hand-drawn portraits of orphaned, neglected or disadvantaged children from around the world. Displaying their pictures are (left to right) top: McKenzie Swart, Christen Sanderson and Sadie Adamy. Bottom-Mikaela Houck, Maggie Ryan and Audrey Proto. (photo by Ms. Koblentz)

Young children are the most noticeably thrilled to receive their gift, commonly holding their portraits proudly and showing them off to everyone around. Teenagers may prefer to receive their portraits in a more private place where their peers are not crowded around to see. Their immediate reactions are not always as easy to assess, but they often display the

portraits in their lockers, or even prop them up on their pillows.

The students participating are allowed to send a picture of themselves along with their work, but are not permitted any further contact with the child to prevent any unnecessary disappointment if the correspondence is unable to continue.

### Winter photo contest noted

The G. Ray Bodley High School Photo Club is proud to announce the second annual winter theme photo contest. Students and teachers are invited to submit 1-3 printed pictures to Ms. Amerault in room 120. The deadline for photos is March 7. See Ms. Amerault for details.