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Making a book that heals



Linck pictured with some of the children she worked with in Argentina. *Courtesy photo.*

January 4, 2010

At a foster home in San Carlos de Bariloche, Argentina, where children were placed to recover from abuse or simply to gain some stability in their troubled lives, Anna Linck, a Northeastern student on co-op, infused hope and self-esteem.

After putting cameras in the hands of her young charges and asking them to focus the lens on some element of their lives, she encouraged the children to write about their personal experiences for a book project.

Last spring, at the end of her co-op as an English instructor, Linck and the children had enough photos and words to fill the pages of

"La Comunidad De La CHacra," a 64-page Spanish alphabet book.

"By creating the book, the children had a chance to describe their community and daily lives, and the project helped them gain a sense of pride and ownership in something they've created," says Linck, who graduates from the University this month.

The human services and international affairs major got the idea for the project from the work of well-known photographer Wendy Ewald, who pioneered the Literacy through Photography project. An admirer of Ewald's methods, Linck says she exchanged an e-mail with the photographer first, and then created a curriculum with the help of a former photography instructor at another university.

"It took me a few months to plan the classes. Part of the curriculum involved having them take their own portraits, and do some writing before and after they took the pictures," she says.

"This was to facilitate writing about the self, family, community and their dreams."

She knows the book by heart.

One of her favorite entries, found on page 35, is by a 3-year-old who defines what it means to cry. On the facing page across from a black and white close-up of the child, is the sentence, "To be sad for something that has happened to you in the day or for something told to you and had put you in a bad mood."

Smiling as she thumbs pages, Linck says the book project and her other experiences on the co-op inspired her to pursue a graduate program in education.

"I'm applying to programs that integrate arts in the curriculum, because I think it's a really effective teaching method that reaches kids by being hands on."

The Minnesota native, who first discovered Argentina on a six-month study abroad in 2008, credits the University for an international experience that put her on a path to a meaningful career.

"This was such a rewarding experience. Seeing the children through the whole process was amazing," she says. "It was something we all learned from, together."

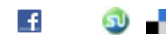
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