



Everyone has a story. What's yours?

# LINDA THOMAS



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## Photography is the universal language

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A little boy from Ethiopia, new to Seattle, sits in a classroom next to a girl whose parents are from Honduras. They struggle with English, but they both have huge smiles when they look at a picture of a puppy.

Photography may be the universal language.

"There are immigrants from all over the world, they don't speak any English. They're very at-risk populations," says Rafael Soldi with the nonprofit Photo Center Northwest.

"We work with them and use photography as a visual language to empower them and help them tell their stories and learn English, and acclimate to the Seattle School system and American culture."

Seattle public schools have students from 98 countries, who speak 129 languages.

"On any given time you can have a classroom where 13 different languages are spoken, and the only thing they have in common is English, but they don't speak it well. It's fascinating to see them to see them begin to understand each other through photos that they take at home and share in school," Soldi says.

Each year Photo Center NW holds a photography competition to fund its outreach efforts. Their "long shot" contest begins Friday night at 6:00 and lasts through Saturday at 6pm.

People are encouraged to shoot pictures of their community, or anything else that captivates them, and submit up to 10 images. Soldi says they'll pick some of the images for an exhibition in July. (Details on their website, [PCNW.org](http://PCNW.org) )

Here are a couple of photos from last year's contest:



Greg Miller, "Sleeping"



Chris Hearne "Green Monster"

While some professional photographers lament the fact that cellphone cameras have made "everyone and anyone" a photographer, Soldi thinks it's great.

"Last year the cover of *The New York Times* featured an iPhone picture taken in Iraq. I never thought that would happen, but it's very exciting that everyone can be a photographer now," he says. "Every click of the camera could make a big difference."

By LINDA THOMAS

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### ABOUT LINDA

Linda is Senior Features Reporter and Digital Journalist for KIRO Radio and MyNorthwest.com. This is her local news blog, with an emphasis on social media, technology, Northwest companies, education, parenting, and anything else that grabs her attention.



If you have a news tip or story idea, I'd love to hear from you...

To leave a voice message for Linda about any of her stories call toll free 1-855-251-2383

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