

Giving sick kids booster 'shots'

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When other people looked away, photographer and social worker Annie Levy didn't just look, she *saw*.

She saw young adults at Montefiore Medical Center suffering life-threatening illnesses without an outlet to express their emotions or how their lives and their illnesses had impacted those around them.

So Levy decided to put cameras into their hands.

In 2008, through a grant, she started Photo ID, a program and foundation that allowed young patients at the Bronx hospital's Oncology Support Group to become shutterbugs.

She taught them how to use the cameras to "give voice to their experiences."

The program -- funded by the Fred J. Epstein Pediatric Care Foundation -- culminated in a photo exhibit in the lobby of Montefiore that the kids titled, appropriately, "Not Defined by Diagnosis."

"They truly celebrate life in their photos," says Levy, nominated for a Post Liberty Medal in the Leadership category by Peter Davis, who met her through a program she developed for seniors at the Waterside Plaza apartment complex in Manhattan, where he is the managing director.

This year, Levy is trying to raise funds so she can expand the program to teens in other special-needs groups, such as homeless kids and those with emotional and behavioral issues.

Of her original group of 12 teen photographers, four have died, but because of Photo ID, their work lives on.

Annie Levy

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