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Menaul School eighth-graders contemplate some of the more than 100 photographs of children from around the world taken by Dr. Laurence Cole, Howard and Friedman Distinguished Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of New Mexico. Cole donated the photos to Menaul School this summer.

Worldly Photos Get Students Thinking

BY JACK KING
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Menaul School eighth-grader Gabriel Chacon said the thing he notices most about the photos of children, newly hung in the second-floor hallway of Menaul School's Donaldson Hall, is that so many of the children are smiling.

"I know a lot of them come from little countries where they don't have much to smile about, but they're still smiling," he said.

The collection consists of 102 12-inch-by-18-inch color head shots of children from 30 countries. The hallway's white, solid plaster wall makes an excellent backdrop for the children's faces, wrapped in brightly printed textiles or framed by jungle foliage.

Alex Gross, another Menaul eighth-grader, compared the photographs to the giant paper flowers that adorned the hallway until they were moved to make room for the photos. But, she said, they also made her compare her life to the lives of the children in the photos.

"I think about how some days I don't want to be here, how I wish for a snow day. But, some of those kids would probably give everything to be here in our situation. I makes me happy to be here now and it makes me feel driven to help — things in general. There are so many people who don't have what we have, not just kids," she said.

The students' thoughtful reactions are probably what Dr. Laurence Cole was looking for when he donated the photos to Menaul School this

summer.

Cole is the Howard and Friedman Distinguished Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of New Mexico. His specialty is a rare gynecological disease that is most prevalent in Third World countries, but he also is a longtime photographer, and for the last 10 years he has taken his camera with him to photograph children in the countries he visits.

He calls the collection he has given Menaul "The Smiles of the World."

He joked recently that he donated it to Menaul because "it seemed to be the school that is closest to where I live."

On a serious note, he said he knew about Menaul, a 114-year-old Christian school that has made a point of educating students of all races.

"I wanted the pictures to be where there are kids," he explained.

Menaul's president and head of school Lindsey R. Gilbert Jr. said this is the first such donation to the school, but it's one the school accepted with enthusiasm.

"For me, it's an opportunity to expose our kids to the world," he said.

Troy Williamson, Menaul's director of institutional advancement, said the pictures will continue to hang in Donaldson Hall indefinitely.

While there are no formal viewing hours for the public, those interested in seeing them may call Menaul during school hours and request to see them. All visitors much check in at the gate house, Williamson said. Call (505) 345-7727.