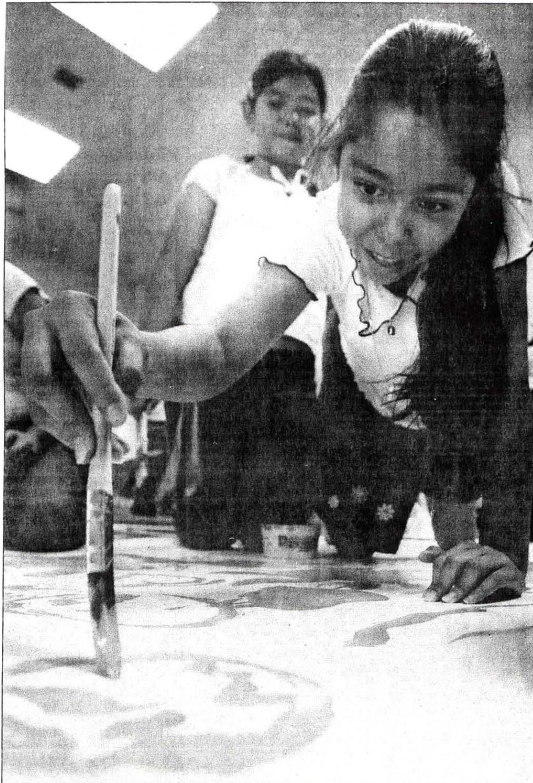


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Children at Montague Street Charter School paint part of a 40,000-square-foot canvas Monday. Their art will help cover a giant passenger blimp, to be flown across the nation.

David Sprague/Staff Photographer

BIG DREAMS CAN SOAR

Kids' art to fly across U.S.

By Rachel Uranga
Staff Writer

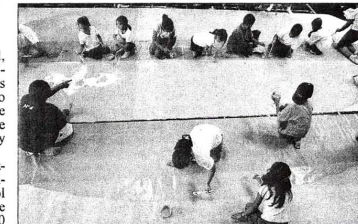
PACOIMA — With red, purple and blue paints, 7-year-old Manuel Dehoyos brushed out his dream: to become a wealthy doctor so he can help people such as the homeless man living in the alley next to his house.

His hopes and those of dozens of other students at Montague Street Charter School fueled a furious painting spree there Monday. More than 60 children jostled for a space in front of portions of a massive 40,000-square-foot canvas that will eventually cover one of the largest passenger blimps.

The Soaring Dreams Airship will be flown across the nation. The dreams of 6,000 children, including Manuel, will be displayed next year at baseball stadiums around the country, beginning at Ameriquest Field in Arlington, Texas.

"I want to be a doctor," said Manuel, reflecting on his dream. "If you dream, it can come true."

That's exactly the message that Santa Monica-based Portraits of Hope, founded in 1995, sought to communicate to children at the Montague Street event. Most are immigrants or the children of



Montague Street Charter School kids are among 6,000 in four states painting panels to cover a giant blimp.

immigrants. Many live in poverty.

"It gives the kids a chance to dream and shows them that putting their mind to something, they can accomplish something," said Susan Masberg, executive director of the group that has helped launch several high-profile projects, including a 170-foot-tall tower on Olympic Boulevard at the border of Century City and Beverly Hills.

Founded in 1995, the organization aims to inspire people coping with adversity, trauma or illness by exposing them to high-profile, one-of-a-kind art pieces.

For the airship project, large portions of canvas were painted by children and will later be pieced together in a colorful design.

The tour, which began in Texas in August, will finish up in Los Angeles by February. Holly Mejia, a fifth-grader at Montague, is just glad it gave her a chance to have some fun and be part of something larger.

A parent, Emma Banuelos, watched her son as he put away his paintbrush.

"This makes them proud," she said.

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