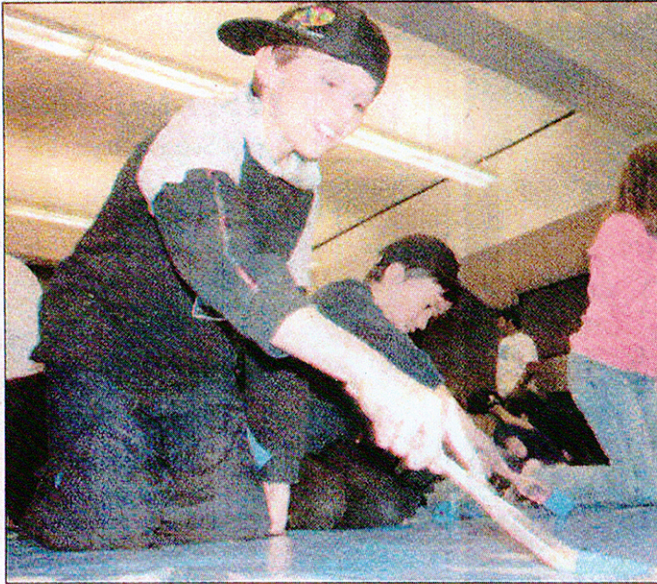


Westwood kids help with world-wide project



Submitted photo

Above, children at the YMCA program at Westwood Elementary help paint a portion of the largest airborne public art project. About 35 to 40 students participated on Dec. 6.

Project

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Soaring Dreams Program who brought together thousands of children from dozens of after-school programs, youth organizations, and pediatric care facilities to create an artistic masterpiece almost five times the size of the Sistine Chapel ceiling. And even more wondrous, it will fly more than 3,000 feet above the Earth.

The creation will completely envelop the Ameriquest Soaring Dreams Airship – the largest airship in the world – and soar above the world, city-to-city and state-to-state. The Soaring Dreams Airship – the first ever of its kind – will be an out-of-this world masterpiece, a striking visual symbol of hope and achievement that will travel to major national sporting events and above stadiums and important public ceremonies. Its message is that the unimaginable is possible through creativity, determination and

teamwork.

Through the program, each child is given a soaring dreams hat and their own specially made blimp bank. The hats were created especially for this project. Each child paints his or her own blimp to keep as a reminder of the day.

The Ameriquest Soaring Dreams Airship is about 200 feet long.

Soaring Dreams officials will return to show all the kids the blimp and their achievement. As part of the program, all students participating discuss fill out a dream or goal card.

"We talk about dreams and accomplishments and each child writes down all the information," said Susan Nassberg of Portraits of Hope. "We get cards that state they want to be doctors, lawyers, geologists and how they are going to achieve their goals.

On Dec. 6, Rep. Taylor

From Staff Reports

Portraits of Hope, a creative therapy program that does one-of-a kind projects around the world, recently partnered with Ameriquest Mortgage to create the Soaring Dreams program. It is creating the largest airborne public art project in the world and Friendswood has become a huge part of it.

On Dec. 6, it worked with the YMCA program at Westwood Elementary School with about 35-40 students.

State Rep. Larry Taylor came out to paint with the kids and put his mark on the historical project.

The Friendswood visit was Portraits of Hope's 45th visit of about 66. Only 66 facilities are participating in this program of which it selected Friendswood to do a session. It will also be in Katy, Clear Lake, Webster, Houston and The Woodlands. The program will work with Memorial Hermann Hospital's pediatric patients as well.

In an eight-month time span, more than 6,000 children in U.S. towns and cities will participate in the program.

The program began this past summer with the

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spoke about his dreams and goals and how he got to where he is today.

There are going to be about 200 or more shapes on the blimp of all different sizes and shapes. Each child signs their name to the edge of the panel they paint.

In 2003, Portraits of Hope performed a project involving about 2,000 children in hospitals.

"We painted on special material that adhered to a DC-3 airplane," Nassberg said. "The plane flew at Kitty Hawk as part of the first flight centennial. This project was partially sponsored by NASA."

The Ameriquest Airship is four times the amount of painting that the children created for the plane, she said.

Log onto portraitsofhope.org for more information.