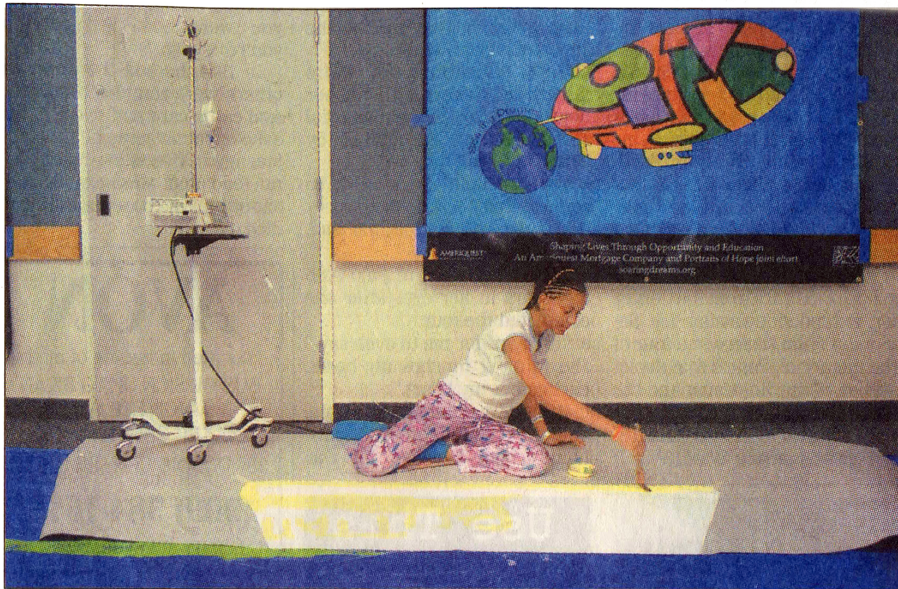


THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

NOVEMBER 23, 2004



GREG VOJTOK/THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

Brittan Boyland, 15, paints her section using the color scheme on the poster in the background.

Sick children join air art project

LOMA LINDA: Several hospitalized youths paint panels that will be placed on a 206-foot-long blimp.

BY DARRELL R. SANTOSCHI
THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

LOMA LINDA—As Curtis Clark of Riverside walked slowly, gingerly into a conference room at Loma Linda University Children's Hospital, his mother followed along behind, pushing a mobile heart monitor tethered

to the 3-year-old.

Curtis was born with a congenital heart defect discovered when his mom, 26-year-old Stephanie Clark, was pregnant. He has undergone four delicate operations to first fix the problem, then clear up complications. She hopes the latest operation, performed Oct. 29, will be his last.

Now comes the hard part, she says. Getting him to go home.

"He doesn't want to leave the hospital," she said. "He likes it

here. He loves the playroom because it has tons of toys. He likes to beat up the play dinosaurs. And he likes to paint pictures. He paints tons of pictures."

Her task got even harder Monday. Curtis and about two dozen other young patients converged on the hospital's conference room for a painting project to end all painting projects. They brushed lime green, yellow, magenta and orange paint

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Loma Linda patients are among about 6,000 youngsters from around the country working on artwork to

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on the outlines of giant geometric-shaped vinyl patterns.

Those patterns, in turn, will be stuck on the side of a 206-foot-long blimp.

The blimp, to be used to carry television cameras broadcast-

did their part. On Monday, it was the Loma Linda hospital's turn.

"Blimps fly all the time, but no one has seen a blimp like this," boasts Susan Nassberg, executive director of Portraits of Hope, an organization that uses hospitalized kids and senior citizens with disabilities to paint high-profile objects.

be 40,000 square feet."

The vinyl panels, spread out on the floor for the youngsters to paint, have peel-away adhesive backs that will allow them to be stuck onto the blimp. The painting is expected to be finished in January and the mounting a month later.

"It's going pretty well," Ben Livingston, 16, of Yucaipa, pro-