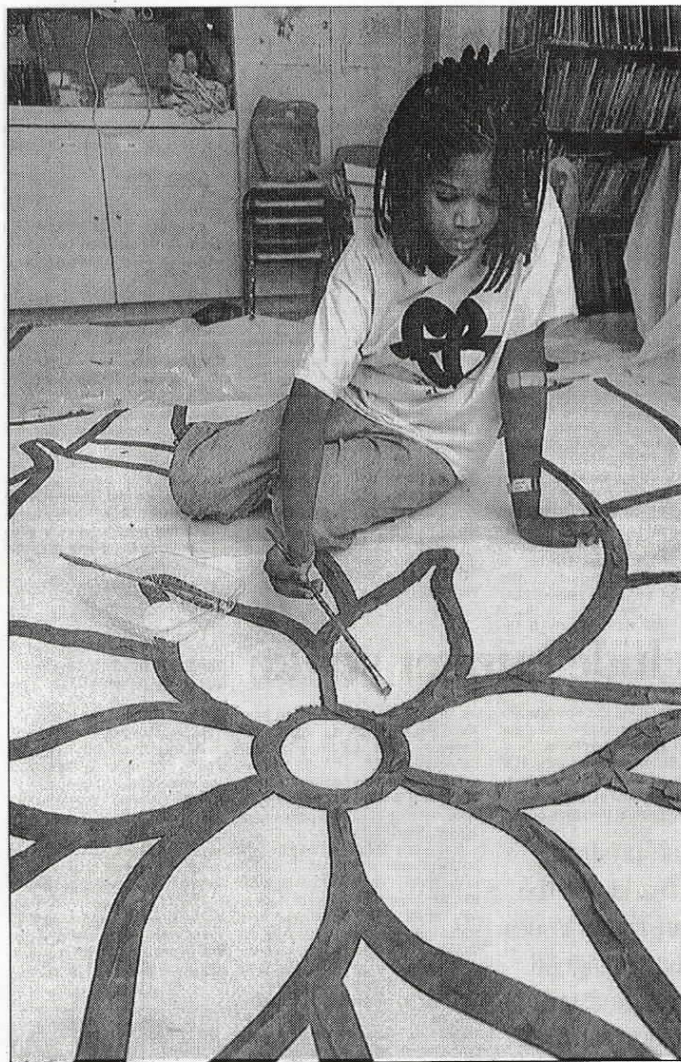


# San Jose Mercury News

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## BRIGHT IDEA



RON BURDA — MERCURY NEWS

At Oakland Children's Hospital, Monica Knox, 15, paints the petals of a flower on her part of a giant mural for a 165-foot-tall oil rig in Beverly Hills.

## Sick kids create mural

Brothers' project to enlist help of shut-ins statewide

BY SANDY KLEFFMAN  
Mercury News Staff Writer

Some children came in wheelchairs. Others walked in haltingly, trailed by volunteers pushing medical equipment that feeds their intravenous tubes.

And others, unable to leave their hospital beds, were visited by teams bringing paints and brushes to their rooms.

For a few minutes Tuesday, several dozen seriously ill youngsters at Children's Hospital Oak-

land had a chance to forget all about hospital wards, terrible pain and disease — and simply be kids again.

They participated in an unusual, statewide project that will eventually link 4,000 sick children throughout California in creating a giant mural to adorn a 165-foot-tall oil rig in Beverly Hills. Youths at Lucile Salter Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford pitched in Monday, and there are plans to bring it to numerous other hospitals in

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## Stanford hospital kids participate in mural project

### ■ FLOWERS

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Northern California. Kaiser Permanente Medical Center-Santa Clara is among those exploring the idea.

When completed in about nine months, the mural will be taller than the Statue of Liberty (excluding the pedestal), and will be the largest monument in the western United States, organizers said. Nearly 25 million cars drive by the structure every year.

The effort is the brainchild of Ed Massey, a Los Angeles artist and author of children's books, and his brother, Bernie, director of the Center for American Studies and Culture in Los Angeles.

Their goal: to brighten the lives of children battling cancer, AIDS and other diseases while creating a monument to their creativity and spirit.

For nearly three years, the two Masseys and other supporters lobbied politicians, businesses and medical institutions to drum up support for their idea.

Now they have received enough offers of free labor, material and cash donations to nearly finance the \$1 million project.

Shanceye Brown, 13, who has a brain tumor and recently had a bronchial asthma attack, was surprised when volunteers walked into her room with brushes, paint and photos of what the tower will look like.

Her hand shook slightly as she painstakingly painted the green background for one of the flower panels as volunteers explained that it will be visible to thousands of motorists.

"I think this is great," said her mother, Jennia Brown. "There's a lot of things that she can't do that other kids can. This is very nice."

Officials at Children's Hospital Oakland said they were delighted to participate.

"Part of our goal is to try to normalize the environment and minimize the negative stress of the hospital," said Susan Marchant, manager of child life and education for the hospital. "Children can get dirty, they can get messy, they can be kids — and they'll have a living legend."

Ed Massey came up with the idea while jogging by the tower.

"Here was this great structure in the middle of the city that was falling apart," he said.

He spent time watching what children like to draw and noted that it often included flowers. So he decided the mural would feature bright-colored flowers representing the four seasons.

Nearly 30,000 children in public and private schools have been painting the base coats for the panels, which are 15 to 40 feet long.

Now children in hospitals and cancer camps are painting the artwork — with non-toxic, water soluble paint.

Tuesday, children were on their hands and knees, carefully painting the flowers, then smiled as they saw the finished product. Organizers have developed "shoe brushes" for those who can't use their hands and have smaller panels for those in wheelchairs.

The work will then be sewn onto fiberglass panels. DinWidie Construction has agreed to provide the huge cranes and labor needed to install the work.

Participants hope many of the children will get better and have a chance to eventually visit their artwork.

Said Marchant: "These kids will have a living monument that they have created."