

Press-Telegram

Long Beach, California

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 1999

A monumental work by hospitalized kids

Art: Children helping to paint murals for tower in Beverly Hills.

By Joshua Lowe
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LONG BEACH — Children at Miller Children's at Long Beach Memorial Medical Center got to take their minds off their health Wednesday, helping paint murals for what will be a massive Los Angeles monument.

Project 9865, brainchild of Los Angeles artist Ed Massey and his brother Bernie Massey, is an artistic endeavor enlisting hospital-bound children to decorate a 20-year-old, 165-foot tall, oil drilling tower at 9865 Olympic Boulevard in Beverly Hills (hence the name: Project 9865), with giant flower murals in colors representing the four seasons.

When the panels are installed, which is expected in November, it will be taller than the Statue of Liberty, the Masseys said.

Jonathan Hess, 8, from San Pedro has been in the hospital since having a cardiac arrest during a dentist's appointment Dec. 23. He is now in a wheelchair and cannot speak, due to brain damage.

His grandparents, Carol and Jack McCulloch of Hemet, had to help him with the special paintbrush, but it was clear from his smiles and twinkling eyes that Hess was having fun.

"This has been absolutely devastating," McCulloch said. "But this is great, and he seemed to get a kick out of it."

More than 4,000 children in every hospital pediatric unit in California have been painting the colorful panels on canvas, including kids at Miller, for the past several months.

"We bring a little childhood into the hospital for kids who can't ride a bike, fly a kite, or even go outside to play," Bernie Massey said. "We at least try to give them something to take their minds off their condition, even if only for a little while."



Jonathan Hess, 8, of San Pedro, gets a little help from his grandparents, Carol and Jack McCulloch of Hemet, in painting a panel to be mounted on a 165-foot tower in Beverly Hills. Leo Hetzel / Press-Telegram

Ed Massey explained that about four years ago, when he came up with the concept and started shopping it around for support, there were many doubters.

"People said it just couldn't be done.

They were asking how can you get kids to paint, then haul it 165 feet in the air, and so on," he said. "Now to see it actually come to life, to see it now the whole process of kids and parents getting active, it's great."