



WEDNESDAY
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today's forecast:

ENTERPRISE-RECORD

DEDICATED TO THE PROGRESS OF CHICO, OROVILLE AND THE GREATER MID-VALLEY AREA

Flower power

Painting panels for tower lets family give back to community

By Larry Mitchell
Staff Writer

At one time, life for the Brott family of Willows centered on hospitals and special events for ailing children.

Then the miracles started happening, and little Holly Brott, a toddler who was terribly ill with cancer, got well.

For a while the Brotts maintained ties with the medical community and others who had provided so much help. But Holly's mother, Sherry, said eventually the family needed to make a break and return to normal life.

Last week, the Brotts were at Enloe Medical Center, once again joining in a hospital activity for children. None of them was sick, however. They were there to help paint flowers on large panels that will become part of a monument to the courage of youngsters battling diseases.

The project is the dream of 36-year-old Ed Massey, an artist from Southern California. For many months, he's been traveling around the state helping arrange for children in hospitals and others who have recovered from serious illness to paint the panels.

At the end of this year, or early next year, the panels will be placed on a 165-foot tower in Beverly Hills. Massey expects thousands of youngsters to be on hand for the unveiling.



A group paints flowers on large panels recently at Enloe Medical Center, part of a project that will end up on a 165-foot tower in Beverly Hills. Started by Ed Massey, an artist from Southern California, the finished product will be a monument to the courage of children battling diseases.

It's been a huge project. When it's done, he expects more than 3,500 children from around the state will have painted. They'll be supported by about 40,000 volunteers, including lots of school children. The volunteers have done such things as prep the panels for the flower painting.

Here's how it all started.

Twenty years ago, when he was going to high school in Beverly Hills, Massey saw the

tower being put up. It covers machinery that has pumped a lot of oil and still does occasional pumping. Over the years, he watched as the gray structure weathered. It wasn't very pretty to begin with, and it began to look worse and worse.

"I thought why doesn't somebody do something with it," Massey said.

Finally, he decided to act. He was in a position to do so, having studied art at

Columbia University. His chief aesthetic interest has been public art — projects that would be out on the street. Most people don't go to galleries, he said.

Besides getting involved in public art projects, Massey had written children's books, and he'd been visiting hospitals, reading his stories to youthful patients. "I learned about

See FLOWER/10A

Flower

From 1A

the value of art therapy," he said. Visiting play rooms for children in hospitals, Massey said he noticed that flowers were one of the things these kids often drew.

That gave him the idea for decorating the oil-well tower. Children in hospitals could paint flowers, and the paintings could be put on the tower. It would be "a wonderful marriage," he said. "A child who may be battling a life-threatening disease would be giving life back to the structure."

The project was born 4½ years ago. Massey designed the pattern for the paintings with help from experts at the Huntington Botanical Gardens in Pasadena. The design is based on a flower with six petals, a floral figure that has appeared in artworks through history. Each side of the tower will represent one of the four seasons.

Several youngsters at Enloe on Wednesday were working on part of the winter scene. They painted panels that will be placed about half-way up the tower.

For the kids, it was a little like painting by numbers. They were given a pattern already drawn on the panel, and they had to fill in the right colors.

It's been great to see the enthusiasm the project has inspired in the young painters, Massey said. He and the volunteers who work with him have devised some ingenious systems so that even kids confined to hospital beds have been able to participate.

"We've seen children who haven't moved their hands in months grasp the paint brush," he said. "This has been the most uplifting program I've ever been involved with. The children are getting the chance to say, 'I'm contributing to something.' The kids and their family and friends will see this thing for many years."

The painting is done on sheets of polyvinyl laced with fiberglass. Once all the panels are painted, they'll be specially treated to stand up to the weather.

The work is called Project 9865. It's named after the tower's address — 9865 Olympic Blvd. The tower stands on one the most heavily traveled streets in the LA area. It's about five minutes from UCLA.

The Project 9865 budget of about \$1 million includes in-kind



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Participating in the painting work at Enloe Medical Center: Back row, left is Holly Brott, right is Kyle Brott. They are holding a poster showing how the tower will look. Middle row (left to right) are Shawna Wright, David Wright and Paul Wright (like Holly, he was a cancer patient). Front row is Sam Brott. David and Sam are wearing Project 9865 hats. The Brotts are from Willows and the Wrights are from Princeton.

services, such as the offer of Dinwiddie Construction to provide 120-foot cranes and manpower to transform the structure.

Massey is no mogul, able to fund this effort on his own. He and his team have done a lot of fundraising, and they are still seeking help. Donations can be sent to Project 9865, 2118 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 527, Santa Monica, CA 90403. The campaign has its own website: www.project9865.org.

Fortunately, Massey said, it's been easy to get support for the effort. Former Gov. Pete Wilson and senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer agreed to chair the project. And many companies and organizations are helping.

It was easy to recruit Holly Brott, too. As a former patient, she was invited to take part. "I asked Holly if she'd like to do it, and she was eager," said her mother, Sherry.

Holly is fine these days. The only thing the 9-year-old needs to

do is make a yearly trip to Children's Hospital in Oakland for a checkup.

But seven years ago she and Sherry, and her dad, Bob, endured the most terrifying time. A tumor was discovered on Holly's liver. For months, the family faced horrible uncertainty. Test after test kept pointing to the very worst prognosis.

There came a time, Sherry said, when she had to just "give Holly to God" and accept whatever happened.

It was wonderful when the risky surgery succeeded, Sherry said. Holly's tumor was removed and she recovered.

Most of the family — Holly, Sherry, Kyle, who is 11, and Samantha, who is 3½ — were down on the floor and painting at Enloe's Esplanade Building Wednesday.

"We got a lot of community support," said Sherry. "It's nice to give back."