

artsource

MEDIA RELEASE, 8 June 2012

In-hospital artist residency provides sweet escape for sick children at Princess Margaret Hospital.

In an innovative and special project initiated by Princess Margaret Hospital and facilitated by Artsource; WA textile artist Sarah Toohey completed a three month residency within the children's wards at PMH, designed to enrich the lives of hospitalised patients.

The Artist In Residency (AIR) program included cooperative art workshops and one-on-one learning in fabric and stitch work using layering and 'mola' techniques. Sarah Toohey engaged in regular ward visits as well as creating art from a space set up inside 'Club Ado' – an activity area in the hospital devoted to adolescents and teens.

The arrangement has effectively enhanced the wellbeing of the patients' time at PMH. Bedridden children were provided a positive distraction from hospital life as well as the opportunity to participate, learn new skills, express themselves and be affirmed by having a selection of their work displayed in an exhibition at the PMH art gallery.

With funding from Little Athletics, the Princess Margaret Hospital Foundation, and support from the Starlight Foundation and Club Ado; Artsource collaborated with the curator at PMH Gallery, Rebecca deRooy to develop and source artists for this unique program.



Patient Amy, making a 3D sculpture guided by artist Sarah Toohey, at her bedside inside Princess Margaret Hospital. Photo: courtesy of PMH

Among the children who engaged with Sarah Toohey during her residency is fifteen year-old patient, Janine, who was uplifted by absorbing herself in the textile projects.

"Creating textile artworks helps to calm me down when I'm upset, I find it relaxing," Janine explained.

Also bettering from the artist residency program was patient Jalen, eleven.

“I had never worked with fabric before and I didn’t know I could do something like this, I didn’t know fabric could be used this way”.

The project had unanticipated additional benefits- encouraging interaction between patients and providing a much needed diversion for patient family members too.

“You’re so busy making sure that the stitch is straight that you’re not thinking about anything else.” Tells Noelene; mother of PMH patient, Janine.



One of the works made by artist Sarah Toohey with patients at PMH, on display at the exhibition. Photo: Mark Zimmerman.

Brooke, sixteen, expressed that the project allowed her to mix with other children;

“It brought us together as a group. Everyone came into my room one day, about five patients, their parents and Sarah, and we worked together. I hadn’t met those people before. It was an enjoyable experience.”

Research, including clinical outcomes, indicates that the presence of Arts in Healthcare improve patient health, recovery and wellbeing. Arts have been present at PMH for some time but having an artist actually taking up residency within hospital quarters is a first. Having Sarah Toohey on site opened up a wider benefit to mental wellbeing and learning.

Rebecca deRooy explained how this new model implemented with assistance from Artsource, has been a valuable operation:

“Art in hospitals is important, but participation is

equally significant.”

The PMH AIR program has proven extremely fruitful in its objectives. It is held that this partnership will act as a leading model for future AIR initiatives. PMH and Artsource are already in discussion about the next residency, this time to involving Indigenous artists.

Sarah Toohey’s residency at PMH concluded at the end of last month with an exhibition currently open for public viewing inside PMH. The exhibition displays artwork from the child patients as well as works which Sarah Toohey created during her residency. The exhibition is located at the entrance to the Princess Margaret Hospital on level 4 and is open to the public from 8am to 5:30pm, Monday to Friday until 29 June.

If you would like to discover how you can implement a similar artist based program and integrate visual art into your organisation or environment– contact Artsource: (+61 8) 9226 2122.

PMH AIR Exhibition details:

Princess Margaret Hospital for Children; Roberts Road, Subiaco WA 6008

Monday – Friday, 8:00a.m.- 5:30p.m.

Exhibition on until 29 June, 2012.

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ALL MEDIA ENQUIRIES + IMAGES:

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About Artsource

Artsource is Western Australia's peak representative body for visual artists. A not-for-profit organisation in operation since 1986, Artsource works to expand and improve the sustainability and profile of artists through practical services and support. For more information, please visit www.artsource.net.au