

Press Release

Issue date: 10 December 2007

Local artists inspire young patients at the RUH in run-up to Christmas.

Local artist and sculptor, Edwina Bridgeman, who is renowned for making sculptures from recycled materials, is one of the artists in residence at the Royal United Hospital's Children's Unit in the lead up to Christmas.

Writer Sue Mayfield, from Gloucester, is also working on the unit. Both Sue and Edwina will work alongside the play specialists and teachers on the ward.

The theme of their work with young patients is "Carnival of Dreams" which is inspired by one of Edwina's recent artworks "The Procession". The concept of a procession or carnival is all about celebration and the coming together of a community. At the start of each workshop Edwina shows the children imagery connected with the idea of carnival, and helps inspire them to turn their ideas into art work. Writer Sue Mayfield uses words and poems to develop the theme further. This will be added to the 'bunting' and 'lanterns' made by the children and Edwina. A collection of the work made by the young patients will be mounted as a "visual procession" next year, in the long corridor that runs through the Children's Unit.

RUH Arts co-ordinator Hetty Dupays says: "We are so lucky to have Edwina working with the children here; she has a natural ability to communicate her visual ideas with young people and all involved find her a joy and inspiration to work with. Having an experienced writer involved as well has given an extra dimension to this project, and everyone is looking forward to seeing the results of these residencies – assembled, framed and brightening up the ward's corridors."

Altogether, Edwina will work with children both on and off the unit for a total of 18 days in the coming months. She is well known in the hospital already. Visitors arriving in the hospital's main entrance, the Atrium, can see her magnificent 2004 sculpture "Journey" suspended from the ceiling.

The sculpture is made from recycled materials and depicts a group of people in a huge wooden boat, sailing across the sky and sea, complete with fish, seabirds and even a ship's cat.

Edwina Bridgeman says it's great to be working in the RUH again: I'm delighted to be involved in this project. I think there is a huge value in working directly with patients and their families, it is very much a two way process and often ideas which come from the workshops feed back directly into my own practice. I have been made to feel very welcome even when arriving with several tons of glitter!"

RUH Play specialist Lyn Gardiner says Edwina brings out the best in the children: "She really inspires the kids and shows great empathy with them. She uses lovely materials with them and brings lots of fresh ideas, which is fantastic."

During the residencies both Edwina and Sue have held one to one workshops for patients convalescing at home and unable to attend school - through the Hospital Education & Re-integration Service (HERS).

Author Sue has also worked with teenage patients in other areas of writing, focusing mainly on how teenagers can look at ways of expressing their sense of identity.

EDITORS NOTES

- The artist's work in the hospital has been arranged by the RUH'S Arts Strategy Group.
- A grant from The Local Network Fund has enabled the trust to benefit from the creative input of Edwina Bridgeman and an Arts Development Grant from Bath and North East Somerset council is funding Sue Mayfield.
- Edwina Bridgeman began her career in theatre. After completing a Diploma in Technical Theatre Arts she worked for ten years as a scene painter, latterly at the Bristol Old Vic.
- Returning to full time education, she completed a BTEC in Art and Design. She is a regular exhibitor at the Victoria Art Gallery in Bath.
- "The Procession" by Edwina Bridgeman was commissioned by the Harley Gallery Nottinghamshire with funding from the European Development Agency. It comprised 18 metres of a carnival procession made from wood and 'found' objects.
- Sue Mayfield has written fiction for teenagers ("On Eagle's Wings, "Patterns in the sand" and "Reckless"), as well as books for younger readers.

Ends

Issued by Brigid Devlin Communications office RUH.Tel: 01225 82 5849