



under the

sea creature
mural
brings
huron
hospital's
pediatric
unit to life—
and makes
coming to
the hospital
a better
experience
for children

The sight of the whale is mesmerizing. To a toddler, the mammal seems to dominate the examination room.

That it's a painting of the large sea creature is beside the point. The image is riveting. In fact, it helps ease concerns a child typically has about the nurse who is approaching with one of those now-familiar needles to give one of those now-familiar vaccinations.

* a feast for the eyes

But even before the child reaches one of those examination rooms in the pediatric services unit at Huron Hospital, he walks, or is carried, down a hallway that is an underwater feast for the eyes. Children visiting the pediatric unit these days are treated to a larger-than-life mural that captures life under the sea, or, at the very least, the trappings of an incredibly long saltwater aquarium.



Angelique Redus, M.D., and Montana Foster watch artist Michelle Brown put on the finishing touches of the underwater mural.

sea

by meta mcmillian

"It's beautiful," says Angelique Redus, M.D., a pediatrician at Huron Hospital and Cleveland Clinic Children's Hospital. "The mural sparks the imagination of the children, even beyond the imagination they already have about what's going on around them. They like touching the paintings and calling out the colors and images they see. The mural is so much nicer than the bare walls that we had."

The fish of all colors, shapes and sizes, and seashells, rocks, treasure chest, crabs, scuba divers, mythical mermaids and other magical inhabitants dancing on the walls of the unit are courtesy of Michelle Brown, an artist from Frederick, Md.

She painted the mural in the summer of 2007. "I hope the parents and kids are enjoying it," she says.

No need to worry about that, Dr. Redus attests. She says parents enjoy seeing the colorful and detailed images of sea life and love the reaction of their children to the paintings. The staff is just as enchanted. "I was flabbergasted when I saw the results," says Maxine

Landers, vice president for clinical services at Huron Hospital. She gave Brown the go-ahead for the mural on behalf of hospital administration.

"I didn't know what to expect. I thought she would be painting some pictures on the wall, but this is fabulous," Landers enthuses. "The off-white walls are now a sea blue." That sea blue is home to an underwater wonderland of coral, sand, starfish, snails in their shells, a sunken ship and other underwater delights that captivate children who visit the unit.

* a concept takes shape

The idea for the mural was born in May 2007 after Brown's sister Beth Nagy, now a pediatrician in Pennsylvania, was completing her residency in pediatrics. The unit at Huron Hospital was part of the rotation of pediatric sites Nagy visited as part of her residency.

"I like to do anything to help my sister, and she talked about how plain the walls were there," says Brown, an art teacher at Montrose Christian School in Rockville, Md.

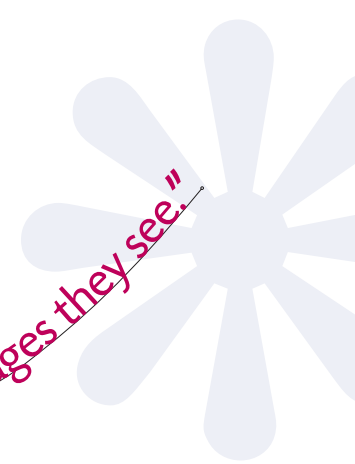
Walls in the pediatric unit, which is on the third floor of the hospital's renovated Center for Women and Children, were the standard hospital off-white color. After informing Brown of the barren site, the two sisters discussed Brown using her artistic talents to bring the walls to

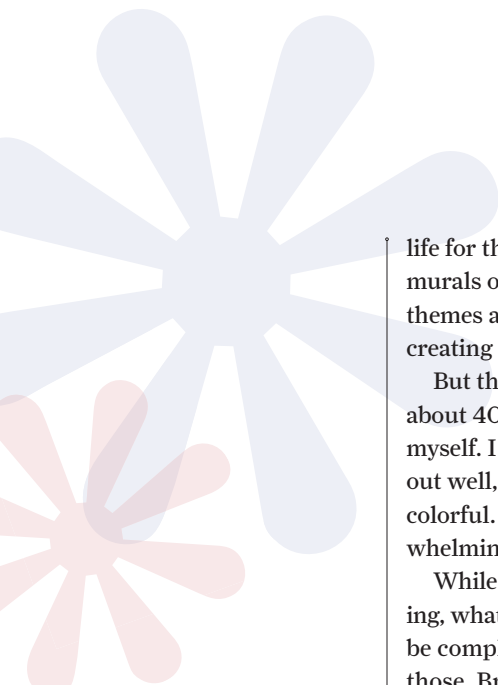


Pediatric patient Montana Foster admires the mural painting in the pediatric unit at Huron Hospital.



"They like touching the paintings and calling out the colors and images they see."





life for the children. Brown says she has painted murals on bedroom walls that featured various themes and has collaborated with a colleague in creating an underwater mural.

But the mural at the Huron Hospital unit, about 40 feet long, “is the largest I’ve done by myself. I enjoyed doing it and believe it turned out well,” Brown says. “It’s very bright and colorful. I wanted it to be appealing, not overwhelming, for the youngsters.”

While not wanting the mural to be overwhelming, what underwater world of wonder would be complete without a few thrills? To provide those, Brown added a few not-so-menacing-looking sharks, which swim alongside the other sea dwellers. In addition to the mural, Brown also featured sea creatures—such as an octopus, whale, dolphin and starfish—in each of the four examination rooms.

*** artist donates time, resources**

Before starting her work, Brown contacted Landers and sent the hospital administrator her portfolio. Landers served as liaison for hospital



Mural artist Michelle Brown

administration, and gave the go-ahead for the artwork. Brown arrived in the Cleveland area a few days before beginning work to take a look at her huge canvas and meet with Landers, Dr. Redus and other key staff.

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For information about outpatient pediatric services at Huron Hospital, call **216-761-7281**.



Nagy had taken pictures of the walls and unit before completing her residency. Brown used them to help plot her strategy to bring the walls and examination rooms alive with a pot-pourri of sea life. Landers says she and Brown discussed a few themes, including Noah’s ark as well as the underwater idea. Both agreed on the sea theme.

Brown donated her time and resources to create the water world for tots. She and her sister shared expenses for Brown’s visit, but Brown used her own paints and brushes to re-create the colorful underwater scene. She started painting on July 28, 2007 and completed her work on Aug. 5.

Brown worked evenings and weekends, so she wouldn’t disrupt the work of the staff. “I was pretty excited about the project,” she says. “I had a general idea of what I wanted to do, and had made a couple of sketches.”

Landers admits to being “a little anxious” initially, because she could not imagine the final outcome. But after the mural and examination room artwork was completed, Landers says she was “blown away.”

*** a better experience for children**

Children who visit the pediatrics unit at Huron Hospital no doubt share that sentiment on a daily basis. “The idea was to bring in some color to pediatrics and an environment for kids to help distract them when they are coming in for examinations or vaccinations,” Brown says.

Mission accomplished. Dr. Redus says the mural and sea creatures in the exam rooms have helped make visits to a hospital pediatrician a more pleasant experience for children. The images also have become part of the arsenal that nurses use to calm youngsters who need vaccinations.

Some children may now consider nurses wielding needles a small price to pay for the chance to go eye-to-eye with a whale. **vev**