

FAMILY LIFE



R-S photo by Brad Garrison

Putting the finishing touches on the Children's Art Gallery are Spencer's mom, Barbara Enochian, and Spencer's best friend, Lucas Fox.



Spencer drew this picture of his doctors in San Francisco.

To Honor and to Help

Barbara Enochian hopes the gallery, dedicated to the memory of her son, helps other young hospital patients

■ The gallery, dedicated to the memory of Spencer Enochian, gives Shasta County schoolchildren the opportunity to display their artwork.

By Jon Lewis
R-S Family Life reporter

Before an extremely rare and deadly form of cancer took his life at age 6, Spencer Enochian of Hedding spent a lot of time in hospitals.

To help keep him busy during the hours and hours of tests, transfusions, chemotherapy and radiation treatments, his mother Barbara would encourage him to draw.

The artwork that resulted became something positive mother and son could share during a long and emotionally draining ordeal. Now that he's gone, Mrs. Enochian wants to share Spencer's art, and that of other north state schoolchildren, with patients and others who have to spend time in a hospital.

Today, with help from Rosie Orwig, coordinator of the Children's Art Outreach Program at the Redding Museum of Art and History, Mrs. Enochian will formally open the Children's Art Gallery in a hallway adjacent to the Pediatric Pavilion at Mercy Medical Center in Hedding. The opening reception is from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Mrs. Enochian said she got the idea for a gallery when she and Spencer were at Children's Hospital in Los Angeles investigating the possibility of a bone marrow transplant. A hallway in the hospital had about 10 paintings by children.

"He would go up and down the hallways in a wheelchair looking at pictures. We went back (later) to Los Angeles and the pictures hadn't changed. I thought it would be nice to see some different pictures."

Mrs. Enochian, who continues to volunteer with Mrs. Orwig's outreach program by sharing prints of famous artists with Manzanita Elementary School students and organizing hands-on art projects, is also a fan of children's art.

"It has so much to say that adults can't say. Kids' art comes from their heart — they don't worry about technique or proper color. I think it's sad that people lose that (as they get older)."

"I thought it would be great to take the art that all these kids have done and show it to the public. This combines my interest in art, Spencer's interest in art and our loss and puts it all together in a gallery," Mrs. Enochian said.

And Mercy, where Spencer underwent a lot of his treatment, is an appropriate location for the gallery. "I've really bonded with Mercy. The nurses there are good friends of mine," she added.



Photo courtesy of the Enochian family
Spencer, left, and Lucas were buddies. Lucas drew a picture for the gallery.

The gallery is a fitting memorial for Spencer, according to Mrs. Orwig, who worked with Spencer at home during his last days to help him complete a sculpture of his cat.

"We were glazing it and he was in so much pain he could hardly hold a brush. It was very touching. He wanted to continue on with his art no matter how much pain he was in."

"Children's art is so interesting — they just put their feelings



Photo courtesy of the Enochian family
Spencer with some first-grade pals on his last day at school.

down. And there are very few places where you can see children's art. This is a really great thing to do," Mrs. Orwig said.

Both Mrs. Orwig and Mrs. Enochian will collect art for the gallery from elementary, junior high and high school students, many of whom are involved in the museum's outreach program. The exhibit of 29 pictures will

be changed every six weeks. The framing was paid for by the Spencer Enochian Memorial Fund, which was established at the museum after Spencer's death in April 1992. Contributions are accepted at the museum.

The initial exhibit includes a

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Gallery

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drawing by 10-year-old Lucas Fox of Redding, who was Spencer's best friend and a schoolmate at Manzanita Elementary. Lucas, who is now a fourth-grader, drew a picture of a dinosaur on top of a valley.

"I read a lot about Jurassic Park and I'm pretty good at drawing dinosaurs," Lucas said when asked about the subject of his artwork. Lucas said he and Spencer would often get together to draw or play Nintendo video games.

When Spencer was hospitalized at Mercy, Lucas said he would sometimes spend the night with him to help keep him company. A soft-spoken boy who still misses his friend, Lucas conceded it was "pretty tough" dealing with Spencer's illness.

Andy Dolan, 9, a third-grader at Manzanita, is in Spencer's first-grade class and said the gallery is a neat way to remember his friend. "I used to have a lot of squirt gun fights with him and I used to always sit with him at lunch," Andy recalled.

Although he didn't have the same class as Spencer, Robbie Small, 8, said he would see Spencer at recess. When Spencer was feeling better, Robbie said he would visit him at home and go swimming or play basketball.

Robbie's third-grade teacher, Marietta Sheffield, had her students who knew Spencer write letters about him as part of a writing workshop last Friday. "I wrote about all the fun times we had and what we did when we went to his home," Robbie said.

After Spencer's death, a tree was planted in his memory outside Shirley Steinberg's first-grade classroom. A bronze commemorative plaque was installed nearby. "Kids who never met Spencer know of him because of 'Spencer's tree,'" Mrs. Enochian said.

Establishing the gallery is another way for Spencer to be remembered, Mrs. Enochian said, and in the process it is helping the family to heal. Spencer is also survived by his father Steven, a Redding attorney, and brothers Sam, 17, and Brian, 15, both Shasta High School students.