

## Pontiac Students Share Creativity for Cancer Patients

Washington Elementary School students Pontiac, Illinois are working to brighten the day of chemotherapy patients, one brush stroke at a time.

A fifth grade class at the school has donated a roomful of artwork for the infusion clinic at the OSF HealthCare Saint James – John W. Albrecht Cancer Clinic Building.

Some of the fifth graders made a special presentation to infusion clinic patients this week, giving them a piece of art to take home as well.

The project was the idea of Pontiac resident Shelly Lindstrom, whose husband Lane gets treatments at the clinic. Her daughter Liz is a teacher at Washington. Working with her daughter, the class and the school's art teacher, Lindstrom's idea turned into a reality.

"I went and got to watch the kids paint it, and we told them what we were doing it for and how much joy it was going to bring people, and that to give a little back is nice, and that they'd make some people happy. And they were happy while they were painting them, which was nice to see, too," said Lindstrom.

Amanda Regnier is the K-5 art teacher for Pontiac District 429. She was thrilled with the idea of donating art. Regnier says art has a healing quality, and she hopes the work of her students resonates with patients and their families.

"I think it's really important because it's so personal to each person," explained Regnier. "And I think for some people, just having the exposure to art is soothing. Being able to come in and see things on the wall really kind of evokes emotions of joy or optimism in them."

Kathy Nolan agrees. Nolan is the specialty clinic service coordinator at the OSF HealthCare Cancer Clinic Building, and she says the patients there are already excited about the new decor.

"I love that we get to do something to brighten their day," said a smiling Nolan. "When they came in yesterday and first saw the artwork, everybody goes, 'Wow! This is great. This is so pretty.' Just anything we can do to make their day a little smoother or a little brighter or a little happier, I just, I like it."

Regnier says providing the artwork not only benefits the patients, but students are getting life lessons along the way.

"It's teaching kids life skills of empathy and understanding of that different people go through different things, and often times I find that kids that go through these types of things or that have family members going through these types of things are able to make such great connections."

Regnier says she hopes this is just the beginning. She plans on including this project as part of her curriculum in the future and would like for students' art to adorn the walls of the clinic on a rotating basis.