

HealthPark unveils new oncology wing

■ New children's unit features paintings by island artist

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It's been long-term labor of love which is finally nearing completion.

With Thursday's official ribbon-cutting ceremony, the Chrissy Brown Hematology/Oncology Unit at the Childrens Hospital officially opened a children's oncology center. The center is named for the late daughter of Sanibel councilman and former mayor, Steve Brown, and his wife Lena. Chrissy succumbed to breast cancer in 2001.

The new center exhibits a refreshingly non-clinical decor. Besides housing state-of-the-art equipment in a wing designed with kids in mind, the center is the new home of a series of large-scale paintings depicting "Dolly's Hope Harbor." The works were commissioned by the Ireland family of Sanibel in memory of Daphne "Dolly" Ireland. Island artist Sissy Janku, known for her images of tropical scenes, was the artist chosen after a lengthy search.

"I went to all the galleries on Sanibel, and I liked her the best. She was my number one choice," said Daphne Lisenbie, one of Myton and Dolly Ireland's daughters.

Janku is a regular participant in local charity art auctions such as Sanibel Cares, which raised funds for the center, as well as Arts for ACT. Going from smaller scale paintings—most of Janku's work measures about 30 to 40 inches in height—to paintings measuring 5 by 14 feet meant making some adjustments in technique. She soon found that her customary impasto method, in which thick layers of paint are applied with a palette knife, just didn't translate to the very large canvases.



Amy Fleming photo

Artist Sissy Janku watches as her paintings of "Dolly's Hope Harbor" are hoisted up four floors.

"It was a learning process," Janku said. "I learned pretty quickly to use a brush—since I had a deadline, I had to learn pretty fast."

Last week found Janku and Lisenbie anxiously watching over the installation of the 18 paintings, 10 of which were lifted by rope through the atrium of HealthPark Hospital to the new ward, four floors up. Crews carefully hoisted one painting after another, with men stationed at each level to keep them from scraping the walls. They soon drew a crowd of admirers, many wanting to know if the paintings were for sale.

Janku, a native of Germany, is a graduate of the Academy for Graphic Arts in Munich. After receiving her degree in 1980, she worked for a magazine before relocating to Honolulu. While in Hawaii, she made paintings for hospitals and hotels. After about five years, she moved again, this time to California, showing her work in outdoor arts festivals.

Sanibel became her home eight years ago, and she now shows her work at several local galleries, including the Seaweed Gallery on Sanibel and Captiva, Crossed Palms Gallery in Bokeelia, and Louis Sottill Gallery Naples, Orlando, and Key West.

Janku began work on the "Dolly's Hope Harbor" by meeting with Lisenbie to work out ideas in a series of sketches that would become the basis for the paintings.

"She gave me the guidelines, and I did the sketches. She had a lot of detailed ideas about the whole project," Janku said.

One of the paintings depicts a story, close to Lisenbie's heart, telling how a mother eagle teaches her fledglings to fly. The fledgling's first flight is a dangerous one, but the mother stands ready to come to the rescue, swooping down to catch the eaglet, and then carry-