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Sue A. de Mille photos by Chris Johnson

Sue A. de Mille Makes a Hospital More Inviting

By Wendy Crooks

THE PEOPLE OF PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL OF PLANO are certain that Sue A. de Mille and her fascination with diagnostic equipment and seemingly endless contributions have transformed the experiences of patients at the facility into a more comfortable event.

The resulting hospital makeover began as Frisco resident Sue A. de Mille became interested in diagnostic equipment. Originally she was so intrigued by the equipment that she gave full body scans as presents instead of traditional birthday gifts to friends and relatives. Then she read an article in the Wall Street Journal about a digital mammography machine. Due to

her affinity for such equipment, she tucked the article away for safekeeping. Much later, she discovered Presbyterian

Hospital of Plano did not have a digital mammography machine and that the technology far surpassed the results given by traditional x-ray machines. It was then that she decided to contact Dr. Pat Krakos in the radiology department and see if the department was interested in using the digital machine. Ms. de Mille soon made her first donation to the hospital – a Lorad Digital Mammography Machine.

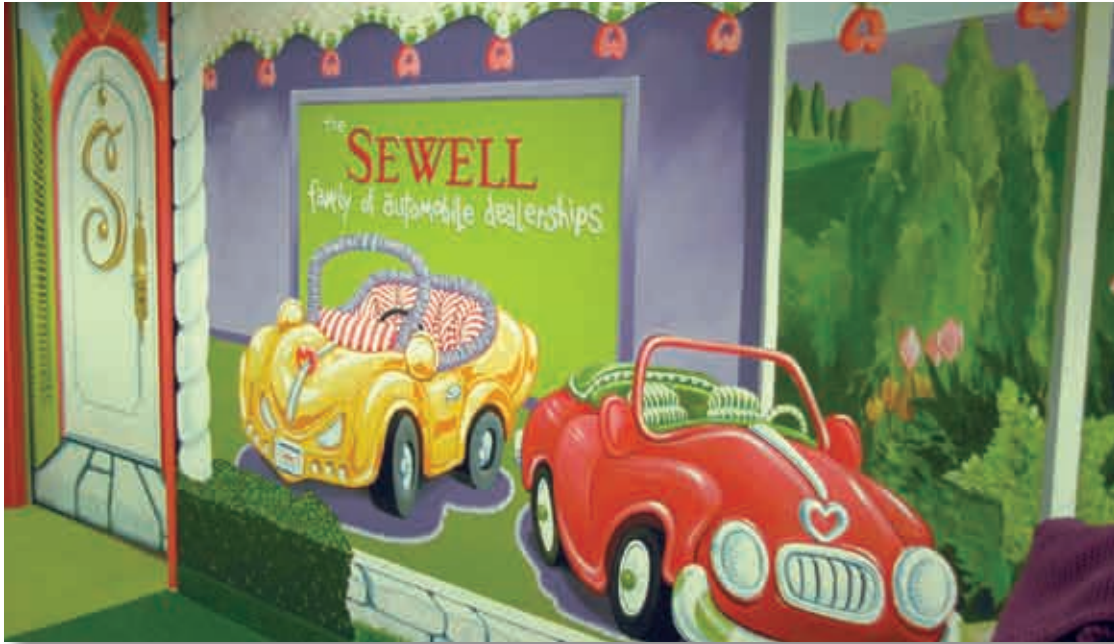
As with anything Ms. de Mille seems to embrace, she couldn't stop there. While getting her own annual mammogram done, she couldn't help but notice that her hospital surroundings were "dismal." She immediately contacted "the powers

that be" to find out if they would mind if "she spruced the place up a bit." Ms. de Mille's "sprucing up" idea resulted in working with designer Gary Riggs and basically gutting the place and starting over. The transformation is nothing short of spectacular. The new Sue A. de Mille Women's Diagnostic Center is

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not only equipped with digital machines but also decorated with flowers, music, coffee tables, toile trashcans and comfortable home furnishings. They even have specialty drapes that were made for the changing rooms to make the experience more comfortable. To add an even greater feminine touch, Ms. de Mille and Mr. Riggs chose paintings from the Gallery VIII. The Gallery VIII features the works of eight very talented local women artists.

Since the renovations have been completed, the response Ms. de Mille has received has been overwhelming. "I've received personal cards, letters and phone calls from people I have never met telling me 'Thank you.' They say that I've made a difference in the whole hospital experience. I admit, hearing those things really gets to you." Ms. de Mille adds, "It is a wonderful feeling knowing you've made a difference for someone you don't even know."

The domino effect continued as Ms. de Mille noticed that the doctors' and surgeons' lounges needed a makeover as well. Her current undertaking is the pediatric floor. The once gray and sterile looking walls and rooms are being transformed one-by-one into a fantasyland for kids. She has worked with local investors to get sponsors for each themed room. Gary Riggs, along with

artists Seven Nielsen and Bill Kirkpatrick, has taken on making each hospital room as special as the children who come there. Some of the sponsors include: Crown Exploration, Willow Bend Dental, the Sewell Family of Auto Dealers and Betty Dunn. The area, which is, now called "deMilleVille" features a castle, a Texas themed room, a bakery, a room with cars and more.

Most benefactors donate money and are through with the project. Ms. de Mille on the other hand, isn't like most benefactors. She laughed as she admitted that she actually tells the hospital what needs to be done, gives them the money and then helps get the job done. After talking with her for some time, I wasn't surprised that this remarkable woman's contributions didn't begin and end with writing a check.

When asked where her passion for such projects come from, Ms. de Mille said simply, "It's a lot of work but honestly, it is a selfish pleasure. It just makes you feel good."

Wendy Crooks is a freelance writer living in Plano.



Examples of new decor by Gary Riggs