Schoolchildren and patients team up to produce Christmas art

A group of schoolchildren unveiled some fantastic festive artwork at St Michael’s Hospice after taking part in a project run by Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

Working alongside the hospice, North Hampshire Palliative Care Service, which is based at Basingstoke hospital, runs an innovative health education initiative called The Hawthorn Project. The project aims to help children talk about death, loss and bereavement by dispelling taboos around the subject, while also raising awareness of the hospice and palliative care team.

Pupils from Burnham Copse Primary School, in Tadley, wrote a letter to their teacher explaining why they wished to be involved in the Hawthorn Project, with 10 of them chosen to take part. The project took place over the course of four weeks and the children were paired up with patients who have life limiting illnesses to create a piece of Christmas-related artwork.

The project ended with a celebratory event at St Michael’s Hospice. The artwork was unveiled to family and friends, with pupils and patients also singing, reading poems and talking about their experiences.

Caroline Nash, who manages Hampshire Hospitals’ Volunteer Befriending Service, said: “It proved to be a rewarding experience for everyone, with each person taking something slightly different away from it.

“The Hawthorn Project has been running for two years, but this is the first time that we have paired pupils with patients through our befriending service. Some of the patients were anxious and nervous to begin with, but by the end of the project they were telling me that it had been a wonderful experience, while the children really enjoyed it as well.”

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Photo: Children from Burnham Copse Primary School teamed up with patients from Basingstoke hospital and St Michael’s Hospice to create festive artwork

Notes to Editors

1. Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust provides hospital services to a population of approximately 600,000 people in Hampshire and parts of West Berkshire.
2. HHFT has around 6,000 staff and a turnover of £353 million a year.
3. HHFT delivers one hospital service across multiple locations including its own hospitals, Andover War Memorial Hospital, Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital and Royal Hampshire County Hospital in Winchester. It also provides outpatient and assessment services from Bordon and Alton community hospitals.
4. As a Foundation Trust, HHFT is accountable to the local community through a system of local ownership with members and elected governors. HHFT has around 18,000 staff and public members. Foundation Trusts are free from central government control and can reinvest any surplus to develop clinical services. They are authorised and regulated by NHS Improvement, an
independent regulator.

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