

### The work goes on

Thirty-four years after his death, there is a new book by J.R.R. Tolkien on the shelves, "The Children of Hurin." **Review, 4E**



Carucha L. Meuse/The Journal News

# A BRIGHTER DAY

## Using art in hospitals to create a warm and caring environment

Georgette Gouveia | The Journal News

**S**ome do a double take. Others, like Doug Capasso, pause to consider the difference a day makes. In the past, whenever he visited New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center in Manhattan, Capasso used the curving, bright-green wall at the end of the corridor in the general pediatrics unit as a guide to his sister's room.

Not today, though. On a brisk afternoon, the wall has been transformed into a kaleidoscopic collage of midtown Manhattan, in which Radio City Music Hall, the Chrysler Building and other beloved landmarks rush to greet you - just the way the city does.

In the foreground of the mural, painted and photographic figures of children wave from windows or look up at the silhouetted skyscrapers that loom in the distance.

"It's colorful, bright and fresh," says Capasso, a Mamaroneck resident, who's in the health-care profession. "It's all the things you want in a hospital. You need something other than sickness."

Please see MURALS, 5E

This is the third in an occasional series of stories on Sparkill muralist

**James Kimak**, who has been commissioned by New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center in Manhattan to create New York-themed murals for its new Komansky Center for Children's Health. The formal opening of the center will be in June.



# Murals brighten halls

Told that the muralist, Sparkill resident James Kimak, is standing by, Capasso extends a hand, and the two fall into a brief, easy conversation about how Kimak achieved a deep perspective through a blend of computer imagery, painting and photography.

"I was trying to get a 3-D effect," Kimak says.

"You've accomplished that," Capasso says, marveling

It's the fifth in a series of city-themed murals that Kimak has created for the hospital's new Komansky Center for Children's Health, which will be dedicated June 6.

Over the past year, Kimak has had Central Park spill into the Family Lounge, Fifth Avenue's Museum Mile extend to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, the skyline soar above the Pediatrics Procedures Suite and the East River float by the Pediatrics Intensive Care Unit.

He has also festooned glass partitions with digital collages that evoke an American Impressionist view of Central Park. New York Aquarium to the Pediatrics Emergency Department.

In the meantime, however, the hustle and bustle of midtown are set to galvanize the General Inpatient Pediatrics Unit.

"There are a lot of long walls in the unit, and each one focuses on a theme like MoMA, Broadway, Times Square, Grand Central and the Chrysler Building," Kimak says of his vision. "The narrow walls are details, like a Sabrett stand." A child's drawing of a miniature taxi rides through the murals, uniting them in playfulness. The formerly green wall at the end of the corridor is a kind of introduction to many of Kimak's midtown themes.

"Certainly coming into the hospital to see something more than a green wall enlivens the spirit," says Ming Wang, who came from Beacon to visit her daughter, a patient. "And it even has a yellow cab: That's more New York than anything else."

"This is so cool," says Joyceline Daniel, who lives at a Ronald McDonald House and has been coming to the hospital for four years with her ailing son. "It makes me feel like when you're outside in the city, and you see what's going on. It makes me feel so happy."

"That's paramount," says Kimak. The staff's reaction is important, because they're here all the time. But the goal is to make (the center) a happy place for patients and their families. That's what the hospital wants to do."

The murals have also made the Komansky Center a place where people like Katie Donovan can be enlightened as well as entertained. Donovan - who radiates warmth and intimacy from the moment you meet her - is a woman of grace in every sense of the word. And she needed all of it when she was admitted to the center in July, pregnant with boy-girl twins.

Complications had arisen with the boy, whom she subsequently lost, and Donovan was placed on bed rest to try to save his sibling. On Sept. 1, she gave birth to the girl, more than three months before the due date. The baby weighed 1 pound, 11 ounces. Donovan and her husband, Tom, called her Grace.



Carucha L. Meuse/The Journal News

James Kimak with one of his latest series of murals he designed for the Komansky Center for Children's Health at New York Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center.

"I always wanted to name her that," says her mother, a Manhattan resident. "She really lived up to her name."

Grace remained in the intensive care unit for four months while her parents, still grieving for their son, adjusted to their new circumstances. "I was a first-time mom, and I was not getting to do the normal things yet," says Donovan, a former first grade teacher.

"In the beginning, we couldn't touch her much at all. I'd put my pinky in (the incubator) to see if she would grab it, and she did. Then we progressed to diapering and holding." The days passed hour by hour, with Donovan often walking the halls that depicted Museum Mile.

"I learned a lot. I honestly was not aware of all the museums in New York," she says.

"I spent so much time looking at the walls that I felt they were kind of familiar, and yet, there was something new every time."

Today Grace is 7 1/2 months old (about 4 months adjusted, since she was originally due Dec. 11) and weighs 12 pounds, 11 ounces. She's been home on oxygen since Jan. 2, although her doctors have begun to wean her off of that.

Grace and her mother still drop by on their way to one of their appointments at New York-Presbyterian.

Whatever else life holds for her child, Donovan is sure of one thing: "She will be a cultured girl, starting with the murals."