

As Seen In...

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The Palace at Weston residents use art to help brighten children's hospital rooms

BY BRETT SHWEKY

Residents at The Palace at Weston, 16025 Emerald Estates Drive, have been using art to help children in hospitals.

The Senior Living Community has recently partnered with the charitable group, Dec My Room, to assist in personalizing hospital rooms for children who are admitted for an extended period of time. From paintings to blankets, the residents have been putting together crafts, hoping to uplift a child in a hospital.

Spearheaded by The Palace at Weston's assisted living activities director Icela Guernica, the initiative began after she connected with Claire Cohen, the daughter of resident Joan Cohen, who suggested the project.

"She told me she worked for this company called Dec My Room, and I thought what a cool concept. I've never heard about them," Guernica said. "I mentioned that we have a bunch of stuff that we make here in our arts and crafts classes that could possibly go to use as a donation to them. She was very much into it."

"They've become so involved that they actually come, I would say, once or twice a month to help us with a particular project," Guernica said. "I've donated anything from different paintings that we've done with the residents. Our most recent thing that we did was blankets, and that was actually Claire's suggestion."

In addition to helping out a good cause, Guernica said the residents have been able to use the arts and crafts sessions as a form of art therapy.

"I noticed that it gave them a renewed sense of artistic liberty, almost," Guernica said. "Because it kind of freed them up. Even the men would be painting butterflies because it's not for them, it's for a little girl somewhere in a hospital."

Along with the artwork, handwritten cards are left in patients' rooms, while Claire Cohen hand-painted cards for the notes. Launched in 2007, Dec My Room uses trained volunteers to find items and ship them to locations based on the likes and interests of each individual patient served.



Residents at The Palace at Weston create artwork for Dec My Room.



The Palace at Weston resident Joan Cohen, left, with her daughter, Claire Cohen, and Rebecca Davis, director of Dec My Room's South Florida chapter.

With the goal of transforming a dull hospital room into a cozier, brighter living space, Dec My Room serves hospitals in 16 states around the county. In Florida, the nonprofit works primarily with Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital in Hollywood and Palm Beach Children's Hospital at St. Mary's Medical Center in West Palm Beach.

For more information about The Palace at Weston, please visit www.ThePalaceAtWeston.com or call 954.217.2000.