

FINISHING DABS OF COLOR



PHOTOS BY MARTIN GRIFF/THE TIMES

Yardley, Pa.-based artist Colleen Attara creates a 70-foot mural for the entrance of Capital Health's new pediatric wing in the medical center in Hopewell Township. Her project was made by shaping and painting over recycled signs.



Soon-to-open Capital Health promises a soothing place to heal

By Erin Duffy
STAFF WRITER

HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP — One week before opening its door for a community open house, Capital Health is busy putting the finishing touches on its new Hopewell medical center.

The signs are in place, patient rooms are being set up and the new hospital's ambitious art program is ready to be showcased.

In building its \$530 million, 660,000-square-foot Scotch Road hospital, Capital Health has put an emphasis on creating a stylish and soothing health environment that resembles an upscale hotel rather than a sterile hospital.

"When people walk in we want them to say, 'I can't believe this is a hospital,'" said Larry DiSanto, Capital Health's executive vice president. "We want them to understand the functionality of it, why we did what we did to create the healing type of environment."

The hospital, which will include an on-site art gallery, will display art from

nearly 70 local artists throughout its corridors and patient rooms.

The works range from the calm and peaceful — Tuscany scenes done in dusty browns and greens by prominent Princeton architect and artist Michael Graves — to the bright pops of yellow, orange and pink found in Colleen Attara's recycled art installation piece.

The Yardley, Pa.-based artist hurried this week to finish installing the piece outside the hospital's pediatric wing. The piece, made entirely from recycled signs found at a Trenton sign company, ties Capital Health's history in Trenton with Hopewell. Rowhomes painted in zigzags of yellow and green give way to a bridge spanning the Delaware, which transitions to country-style homes.

The piece is scaled to a child's eye level, and is designed to be interacted and played with.

"I envision when the children and their parents are sitting here this will give them something to do," said Attara.

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Another recently installed piece, a 60-foot-long mural by Philadelphia artist Donald Gensler, greets patients and visitors just beyond the main lobby.

Like Attara's work, Gensler's mural also focuses on local ties. Wavy blue panels meant to evoke water and the Delaware River give way to slightly fuzzy paintings of photos that Gensler took around Hopewell, from an alpaca raising its head to a close-up of black-eyed Susans.

"There are a lot of hospitals now talking about healing art, but no one talks about creating a healing environment, how it works with architecture," said Lin Swensson, a Nashville-based art consultant hired by Capital Health.

Swensson knows the main mission of the hospital is to heal, to care for the sick and injured. But a thoughtful architectural design along with attractive art and furnishings can relax patients, staff and visitors alike, she said.

"It starts with an innovative hospital that has a mission, and it has all these amenities to get back to the job of healing people," she said. "(The art) is a positive distraction. It's something to lift the spirits."

The hospital's architect, HKS, is known equally for health care and hospitality projects, designing a range of projects from hospitals in Virginia to the tony Atlantis resort in the



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Artist Colleen Attara positions pieces of her 70-foot mural for the entrance of Capital Health's pediatric wing in the medical center in Hopewell. The piece ties Capital Health's history in Trenton with Hopewell. Rowhomes painted in zigzags of yellow and green give way to a bridge spanning the Delaware, which transitions to country-style homes. The piece is scaled to a child's eye level, and is designed to be interacted and played with.

Bahamas.

"The way departments are laid out is done for a very real, specific reason, to create a healing environment, to make sure patients are comfortable and familiar with their environments," said DiSanto. "The local artists, the local

works create that comfort level."

Capital Health will host an open house Oct. 2, a month before the medical center's official opening date of Nov. 6.

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