

Feature News Release  
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## **Hospital's Tree of Lights Christmas art brings out the child in all of us**

Joanne Beattie Kalimeris is hoping to inspire the magic of a child's Christmas for local residents this year.

As the artist who created the colourful Christmas card for this year's Tree of Lights campaign, she is also a key player in Renfrew Victoria Hospital's annual fund-raising campaign.

"Joanne's playful painting captured the spirit of our Christmas theme," comments Barb Desilets, director of the RVH Foundation.

In fact, the foundation is creating a new Christmas tradition on that theme. This year's Tree of Lights lighting ceremony will begin with a one-hour Christmas fair in Low Square, complete with fun activities for children and Christmas cheer for the whole family.

"Renfrew's fair is a huge part of our local culture," says Desilets. "Why not have a mini-fair at this time of year, and let the child in all of us come alive to capture the true Christmas spirit?"

The event will take place from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Friday, December 14, in front of the giant living Christmas tree in Low Square. The grand finale will be the lighting of the tree, with each bulb representing donations made to the Tree of Lights campaign.

"This is our only direct appeal to the community each year," says RVH Foundation Chair Jim Lemenchick. "We are always amazed at the generosity of the people in this area, and we are confident that, once again in 2007, they will find it in their hearts to support our local hospital."

Donations to this year's campaign will assist in the purchase of a portable x-ray unit.

"This advanced technology with wireless capabilities will support our teams in providing the best possible care to patients in our emergency department and throughout the hospital," comments RVH CEO Randy Penney.

"Our Tree of Lights, located in the heart of our community, shines brightly as a true symbol of the hope and caring that is so alive and well in the Renfrew area," he adds.

Donations to the Tree of Lights are often made in memory or honour of a loved one.

The lighting ceremony will have special meaning for Beattie Kalimeris this year. In addition to the honour of being the chosen artist for the RVH Christmas card, she notes that the event will take place on her late mother's birthday.

"I will be proud to be there that day," she says. "My parents before me were supporters of our hospital. We are so lucky to have it, and I feel privileged to be a part of this year's campaign."

The artist says she always donates to the Tree of Lights in memory of her father and mother, who was a member of the RVH Auxiliary and a volunteer in the hospital tuck shop.

Beattie Kalimeris says her artistic talents are also part of her family heritage. She comes from a long line of artists and draftsmen, and jokes that she became an artist "in the womb".

“I’ve been doing it 57 years,” says the 57-year-old artist who works in a variety of media and paints everything from florals and country scenes to old buildings and abstracts. Beattie Kalimeris’ work on “Christmas Fair” took her to a new level of detail in painting. Recipients of the card will be able to enjoy the work throughout the Christmas season, and could easily focus on a different scene within the painting for each of the 12 days of Christmas.

“Each little part is like its own individual picture,” the artist says of the work that features brightly-striped tents, a carousel, a holiday train and plenty of cheerful snowmen. She laughs as she recalls sitting at her easel wearing shorts in July, carefully painting snowflakes.

“It was absolutely fun to do,” Beattie Kalimeris says, noting that a child’s view of the world has been her ongoing inspiration as an artist. She quotes Pablo Picasso, who said “Every child is an artist; the problem is staying a child.”

“Whether they’re 95 or 80 or even a child – if I can capture the child in everybody, my job is done,” concludes the grandmother of three.

Her original “Christmas Fair” painting is on display at Donahue Art & Frame in Renfrew, where prints are available.

The RVH Tree of Lights cards are being delivered to hospital supporters now. If you would like a card, please contact the RVH Foundation office at 613-432-4851, ext. 263.

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(For more information contact Barb Desilets, RVH Foundation Office, 613-432-4851, ext. 263.)