

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS



Program for children in running for grant

Nora K. Wallace

June 9, 2011 5:55 AM

LOMPOC - A Santa Barbara County program designed to bring therapeutic play programs to pediatric patients is in the running for a PepsiCo Inc. \$10,000 "Refresh" grant.

Founded by Lompoc resident and certified child life specialist Belinda Hammond, Child Life Connection is working with nonprofit organizations to provide every hospital in the tri-counties with therapeutic play programs in departments where pediatric patients receive care -- such as emergency rooms, same-day surgery or inpatient areas.

Mrs. Hammond said the organization is seeking the grant to pay for necessary supplies to create murals in pediatric patient areas. The murals would be painted by tri-county art students to "create the necessary child-friendly feel to encourage medical compliance and successful coping," she said.

"Experiencing medical crises can be the most challenging event for any child," Mrs. Hammond said in a statement. "Giving children the opportunity to play not only empowers the child, but gives them the ability to successfully cope with their needed medical care. It normalizes the experience and allows them to be a child in an environment that often isn't focused on coping, but healing."

Mrs. Hammond said Child Life Connection has been working with a number of medical facilities to develop original art in pediatric areas; buy DVD players and video game consoles for patient rooms or as diversions during medical procedures; create mobile and stationary playrooms; and develop pre-operative education materials specifically for children.

The PepsiCo grants are awarded based upon a public voting system that runs through June 30. People with computer access or text messaging can vote once per day for a charitable organization. Votes can be logged at www.refresheverything.com/pediatric-murals. More information is available at www.childlifeconnection.com.

All Content Copyright © 2011 Santa Barbara News-Press / Ampersand Publishing, LLC unless otherwise specified.