

Paint Pals : Building Connections and Nurturing Friendships

In September 2015, Children's Cancer Foundation (CCF)-Singapore piloted the Paint Pals Programme that connects children and youth in hospitals, who are between seven and 21 years old. Adopting a pen pal concept, this programme gives kids and young adults with cancer, the opportunity to interact and exchange artworks that reflect different aspects of themselves and their experiences, including those relating to their stay in the hospital.



Paint Pals aim to reduce feelings of psychological isolation by providing companionship between children and young adults with shared experiences. It encourages expression of thoughts and feelings that are not easily communicated verbally through words. It also enables the pals to reflect and share their ideas and thoughts through exchange of images. They are also able to do perspective checking with someone else from another part of the world. Using art in place of words circumvents language barriers and encourages even those who find it hard to express verbally to participate.

When someone registers for the Paint Pals programme, they are given a pen pal art parcel consisting of paint brushes, crayons and a postcard.

Participants are typically matched according to their age and diagnosis. To foster the ability to search for common bonds, they are given themes revolving around the concept of self, environment, feelings and encouragement. Some examples include 'Introducing myself', 'Introducing my world', 'Sharing loss' and 'Sharing hope'. After the drawing is completed, the artwork will be mailed to his/her paired pen pal in another country. For the pilot phase, CCF has successfully matched its beneficiaries with children of CCF Hong Kong and Yayasan Kasih Anak Kanker, Indonesia.

Hello

I am Altomaster. I received your picture and I like it very much. You draw very well! This picture I drew was my favorite corner- a desk filled with books. I like to design things and do art and craft. Stay strong for you treatment and a Happy Chinese New Year!

From your Pen Pal,
Altomaster

Date: 02/02/16

