

# Healing art part of new cancer center

Open house to be held Oct. 15

By EDWARD STRATTON  
COAST WEEKEND

Chris Laman, director of Columbia Memorial Hospital's pharmacy and cancer care, said he wanted the community to be involved in the building of the new Knight Cancer Collaborative, a partnership with Oregon Health & Science University.

Like hiring local subcontractors to help finish the new cancer treatment center, that meant reaching out to about 20 artists to populate it with pieces designed to help patients going through radiation and chemotherapy.

The cancer center will hold an open house 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 15. And, in November, the artists whose work is featured at the center will be on hand during Astoria's Second Saturday Art Walk to explain their pieces.

## Bringing nature in

Randy McClelland, the hospital's director of strategic initiatives, was in charge of gathering artwork for the cancer center.

"Every single piece that went into the cancer center was created for the cancer center," McClelland said. One exception was artist John Stahl, who died in January but had several of his pieces posthumously selected.

Artists were given guidelines on art in a healing environment by the hospital's consultant from the Planetree Alliance, a group of more than 60 health organizations worldwide focused on patient-centered care.

"The idea behind it is to bring in that healing aspect of nature," said Felicia Struve, a spokeswoman for the hospital.

Throughout the heavily wood-covered and earth-toned cancer center are pieces incorporating nature and local artistry.

Hanging high above the front lobby are several paper lights, made to look like seed balls of the plane tree, created by Lam Quang and Kestrel Gates of HiiH Lights. Murals in the hallway incorporate local flora used in cancer treatment. A locally fallen tree provides a conference table.

## Plane tree

The centerpiece of the center's art is a 2-ton bah relief mosaic of a plane tree — a genus

of North American ornamental trees and a representation of the hospital's patient-centered ethos — done by ceramicist Richard Rowland.

Laman had approached Rowland, locally famous for his large, wood-fueled anagama kiln — a type of ceramic firing technique that originated in China some 4,000 years ago — and asked if he could create something similar at the cancer center from broken pieces of pottery. Rowland, an adjunct ceramics instructor at the college, had been in the middle of building a new kiln, but took a year off to focus on the mosaic.

"I knew it was the right project, because (of) the cancer center being important in the community," he said. "I knew right away I had to take time off from my regular work."

## WHEN TO SEE THE CENTER

The cancer center, at 1905 Exchange St., will hold an open house 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 15.

At 4 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 11, during next month's Second Saturday Art Walk, the center will open again, with artists on hand to talk about their pieces and a presentation by Rowland titled "Art: A Community Connection for Healing."

Rowland started with an at-scale drawing on transparent plastic, later creating molds of the branches and leaves spread over about 80 1-square-foot tiles.

Testing and firing the tiles took three rounds in Rowland's kiln, each requiring five cords of dry wood. Donations of dry wood came in from all around the world, he said. David Nygaard, a member of the hospital's board of trustees and head of Warrenton Fiber Co., trucked in 10 cords of dry wood for the project.

Preparing the kiln takes three days, along with another 110 hours of continuous firing, McClelland said. Volunteers converged at Rowland's property in July to cut wood, load the kiln and complete the final two firings of the tiles.

"It was back to back," McClelland said. "We had to unload the kiln when it was 130 degrees inside. Then we turned right around and did the reloading again, just immediately."

Earlier this month, crews from P&C Construction installed Rowland's mosaic on the side of the cancer center's radiation therapy chamber, around which will be built a healing garden. Rowland was the first to touch the finished installation, followed a couple days later by the entire staff of the new cancer center. Such was the vision of the mural, McClelland said, to help provide some positive energy to patients, friends and family during a difficult time.


"We have an example of one of the greatest healing environments that healthcare can provide," McClelland said. "I feel like everyone has come together at the end." 



PHOTO BY EDWARD STRATTON  
Ceramicist Richard Rowland said he spent about one year designing and building a 2-ton plane tree exhibit for Columbia Memorial Hospital's new Knight Cancer Collaborative.