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Patients' Songs Take Flight

BY BUNMI ISHOLA

Purple could be considered a good color for cancer patients. It's often associated with courage, healing, strength, and confidence. It's also associated with inspiration and imagination, and has been known to stimulate a child's creativity. For patients at Texas Children's Cancer Center in Houston, it's a great color because of Purple Songs Can Fly.

Purple Songs Can Fly is part of the hospital's Arts in Medicine (AIM) program. It gives pediatric patients the opportunity to write and record songs, which are put on purple CDs and then flown to destinations across the globe and beyond. The CDs eventually make it back to Houston, with flight log and signatures, where they are framed and hung in the hospital's in-house studio.

"The name (for the program) was more about flight of spirit, and rising above the illness," says Anita Kruse, songwriter and founder of Purple Songs Can Fly. The songs have so far been on two space shuttle missions. Purple CDs have also toured with the Rolling Stones, and Continental Airlines "flies" the songs in its in-flight entertainment channel.

Kruse works with the kids, helping them write and record a song. Since its inception in March 2006, around 150 songs have been completed, Kruse says. And one of the most powerful things about the songs is they rarely focus on cancer.

"The kids express happiness, joy, and thanks," Kruse says. "Most of the songs are thanking someone who's been influential, or important in their life or cancer journey."

The effect has been so great on both Kruse and the kids that she hopes to expand Purple Songs Can Fly to other Texas Children's-affiliated hospitals.

For more information, or to hear a "Purple Song," visit www.purplesongscanfly.org