

COTO RESIDENT AND FOUNDER OF "ROOM TO HEAL" HELPS VERY ILL CHILDREN THROUGH HER ART

Maria Foulke, a resident of Coto de Caza, has had a few different careers in her life. She has been a CPA, she has owned a paint-your-own ceramics shop, and she has practiced law for over 15 years. However, she felt that her life was still missing something. She wanted to use her creativity and artistic abilities to help others. Her ceramics shop gave her a creative outlet, but owning a shop required a lot of hours away from her family.

She has always enjoyed creating themed rooms for her two children (Chelsea 8, Ryan 6), and has even helped some of her friends with their kids' rooms. It finally dawned on her that she could take that concept and turn it into something really great.

Foulke decided to start the Room to Heal Foundation - a charitable organization dedicated to doing room makeovers for very sick children. She quit her job as a lawyer and set out to make a difference in the community. With the help of her friend, Stacey Barriga, she set out to find children in need of a healing space.

The first room was for Andrew Sprague, a young boy in Ladera Ranch who has Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. His room to heal was an underwater oasis in his playroom. While his bedroom had to stay sterile and untouched, his playroom became a place where he could escape to the sea.

The next project was an NICU waiting room at a hospital in West Covina. The room was decorated with brightly colored train cars and circus animals. It was a nice way to help families with babies in the NICU entertain their older children at the hospital.

Jessica Leoni was the next deserving child to get a room makeover. Her room to heal was a garden to bring peace and tranquility into the Leoni home. Jessica is battling with a fatal disease called Niemann-Pick Type C (NP-C). Her dream was to have a garden room. It has

become her healing space for therapy sessions and quiet time with her parents.

The largest project completed so far is the pediatric wing of a hospital. Nurses and other staff members eagerly helped with painting. Marce Painting of Newport Beach even volunteered their time to paint the base coat throughout the entire wing.



Room to Heal just finished decorating four rooms in a group foster home for the children of the Boys and Girls Town baby home in Trabuco Canyon. They created four different animal-themed rooms that give the children a cheerful space to sleep in their time of transition.

Since quitting her job in the summer of 2004, Foulke has not looked back and does not regret her decision to give up her job (and income) for this charity. She now works for an "income" much more valuable - the satisfaction of knowing that she has made the difference in the lives of these children and their families. Foulke and Barriga continue to work closely together to help children, in a simple way, cope with their illness. Their motto? "Giving kids some room to heal."

If you are interested in learning more about the Room to Heal Foundation or about the children they have helped, please visit their website at www.room2heal.org or email roomtoheal@cox.net. They are always looking for people who are willing to volunteer their time, talent or resources. All donations are tax deductible and sincerely appreciated. Make a difference in the life of a child. Help us make a Room to Heal.