

Provider

PROFILE

ST. JOHN'S REGIONAL HEALTH CENTER

Photographs with a Personal Touch Create Pleasant Surroundings

To create an atmosphere of warmth and care, healthcare facilities are trading in cold sterility for an environment that is more like home to patients and staff. Through its Art Decor Project, St. John's Regional Health Center, Springfield,

MO, has enhanced the hospitality it offers guests and has encouraged staff creativity—two components of the Sisters of Mercy philosophy.

In 1988 St. John's established the Art Decor Committee to choose artwork that would be displayed in the soon-to-be-completed 396-bed West Pavilion. The eight-member committee included supervisors

and staff who worked in a variety of departments such as pastoral care services, respiratory care, the cardiac catheterization laboratory, and employee relations. A representative from the Sisters of Mercy, the hospital's sponsor, was also on the committee.

In 1982, after a renovation project, St. John's had used a number of professional photographs to deco-

rate elevator lobbies and waiting areas. This time, rather than investing in costly professional photographs to enhance the new wing, the facility decided to promote staff creativity and keep costs down by displaying photographs taken by employees, volunteers, and their families. The Art Decor Committee organized a photo contest as a vehicle for choosing

the images to be displayed. The task entailed selecting contest judges, establishing selection criteria, choosing quotations to accompany photographs, deciding where the photos would be displayed, and choosing companies for photo finishing and framing.

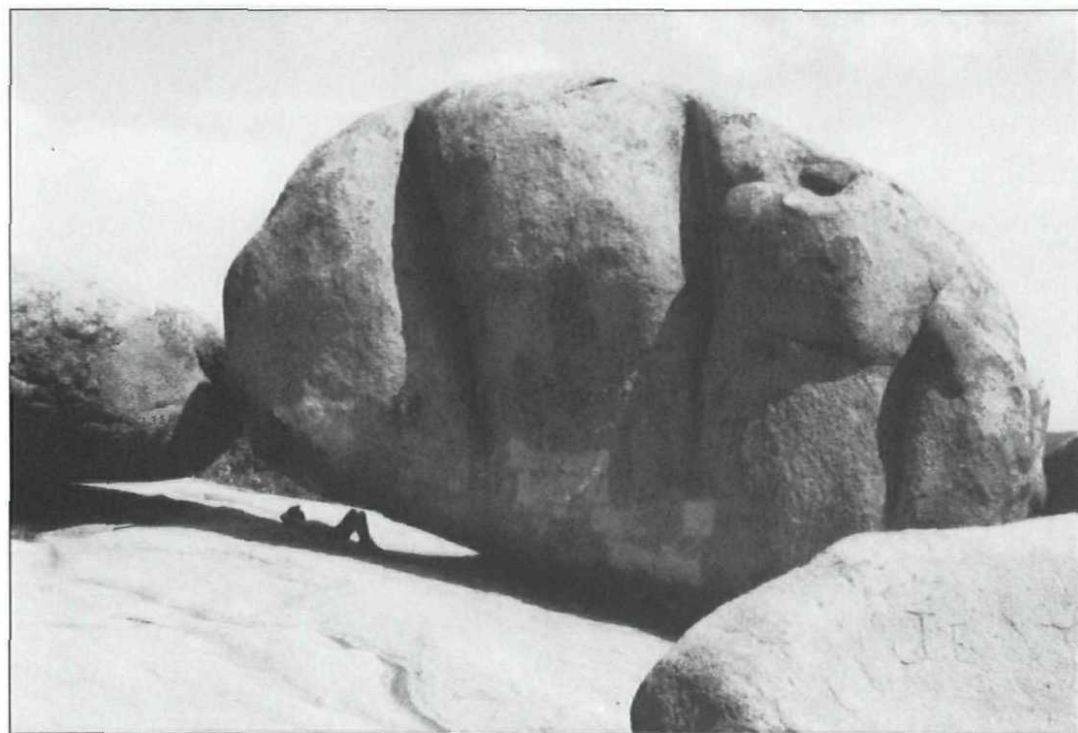
On December 2, 1988, the Art Decor Committee announced the photo contest in a memo and in the employee newsletter. St. John's employees, medical staff, volunteers, and their families had three months to submit as many entries as they wished. Each entry had to include an 8-by-10-inch print, its 35 mm negative or slide, and an entry form giving St. John's permission to display the photograph or use it in publications and audiovisual productions. The four entry categories were religious, people, still life, and nature.

On March 22, 1989, three judges, who were experts in art, design, and photography, reviewed the 886 entries. They evaluated the entries on the basis of

*My God is a
rock where I
take shelter.*

Ps 94:22

Greg Sanders of St. John's maintenance staff shows how overwhelming yet peaceful nature can be.



their originality, composition, and quality. The first-, second-, and third-place winners in each category received \$100, \$75, and \$50, respectively. In addition, the judges awarded 54 honorable mention ribbons. All photographs were on display for two days after the judging.

After the photo contest the Art Decor Committee selected the photographs that would be displayed throughout St. John's Regional Health Center. The photographs are calming images that evoke memories of pleasant times and places. Department heads had some say about the photographs they wished to have displayed in their areas that were not open to the public. The committee decided which of the photographs would be displayed in public areas on the basis of how well they coordinated with wallpaper samples. The committee then chose quotations from Scripture and from the writings of Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy, to accompany the photographs. This process continues as areas in the facility are renovated or new areas are built.

The project coordinator found that orga-



This photo by Sally Ann Beger, a St. John's nursing service staff member, captures a happy moment between friends.

nizing the photographs was her most challenging task. She kept track of many bits of information for each photo that would be displayed: size, photographer, quotation, costs of enlargement and framing, and location for display. The project coordinator recorded this information manually, through a word processing program, and with information stickers attached to the photos; however, she concluded tracking would have been easier if she had used a data base system.

After the photos had been enlarged but before they were framed, the Art Decor Committee sponsored photo-signing receptions to recognize the photographers' talents. Photographers signed their work at each of the 12 receptions where 30 to 100 photographs were displayed. The committee invited all staff and photographers' families to preview the photos.

Physicians, staff, and visitors continue to remark about the beauty of the photographs and the pride

in using local talent. Some have noted it is the best project the facility has taken on.

As of May 1992, 424 different photographs have been selected for display. Several photographs have been used more than once, in different areas, bringing the total on display to 993.

—Authors: Sr. Susan Mary Manion, RSM, was project coordinator of the Art Decor Project and education coordinator, Department of Continuing Education, St. John's Regional Health Center, Springfield, MO, at the time this article was written; and Cynthia Nowicki, RN, is director of the Department of Continuing Education at St. John's Regional Health Center.

*A loyal friend
is like a shelter;
find one and
you have found
a treasure.*

Sir 6:14

The project has cost \$125,000 to date. St. John's administrators believe the boost in employee morale has been worth it.