

# Helping Hands



Unleashing the Healing Power of Art, Gardens, and Fashion

*Can the sight of something beautiful actually help a person heal?*



Joan Drescher's Moon Balloon program invites children to express their feelings through art.

## ART THERAPY

Pulling out a poster-sized pad of paper and a box of colored chalk, Joan Drescher begins to draw a large hot air balloon.

"The Moon Balloon is waiting to take you on a journey to your favorite place," says Drescher, who is an art therapist and founder of the non profit organization, Moon Balloon Project INC. Taking suggestions from youngsters in her group, she colors in the balloon and sketches various figures and animals within the basket. Drescher encourages children to put all of their feelings into the artwork.

Through the Moon Balloon Project, children are invited to fill nine different balloons, ranging from love to anger, and are invited to express their emotions honestly and openly. Drescher's unique art therapy program is designed to help children through stressful situations and to understand illness like cancer. The interactive art presentation enables children who have been diagnosed, or who have a family member



with the illness, let go of their biggest worries and fears and imagine them floating away in a hot air balloon.

"It's a great tool to help kids express how they are feeling," says Drescher, who is the author of the book, *The Moon Balloon*, which takes children through the same therapeutic process, helping to replace feelings of fear and anxiety with peace and love. In addition to working as an art therapist at Mass General Hospital in Boston, Drescher has also helped develop a South Shore Moon Balloon program at the Friends of Hope at South Shore Hospital alongside program lead, Julie Kembel. Over 100 hospitals throughout the country have used her book

as a healing tool to help young children cope with cancer and the hospital experience.

Drescher's gentle manner and uplifting imagery creates a fun and safe environment for children to express their emotions. The imaginative balloon drawings provide much needed stress relief, and also an element of fun.