

Soaring Dreams airship sends kids' handiwork on aerial tour

It is the first-of-its-kind, a flying masterpiece, an airborne artistic expression of hope and opportunity created by thousands of children in after-school programs, youth organizations and pediatric care facilities. The spectacular work of art is the centerpiece of The Soaring Dreams Program, a philanthropic, community development collaboration between Ameriquest Mortgage Co. and Portraits of Hope.

Orange, Calif.-based Ameriquest is a mortgage lender. Santa Monica, Calif.-based Portraits of Hope helps children overcome difficult circumstances and build self-esteem through the development of one-of-a-kind works of public art.



Last fall, more than 6,000 children in after-school programs, youth organizations and pediatric care facilities throughout the Southwest participated in 65 painting sessions to create the Soaring Dreams expression of hope and opportunity on a 40,000 square-foot canvas that was then installed on a Skyship 600, one of the nation's largest passenger blimps. The blimp is operated by Airship Management Services, of Greenwich, Conn.

Known as the Ameriquest Soaring Dreams Airship, the airborne artistic masterpiece is embarked on a nationwide tour of major sporting events and public ceremonies, serving as the airborne ambassador of the hopes, dreams and accomplishments of children across the country and around the world.

"Children should dream big, bold dreams," said Ed Massey, Portraits of Hope founder. "This is an opportunity

for the unimaginable to become real. And it's a wonderful chance for these youngsters to be celebrated all across the country. Soaring Dreams encourages children to think beyond boundaries, imagine life's possibilities without limitation, and to reach as high as their imaginations will allow. How great for these kids to be part of a spectacular and historic accomplishment, and part of something that is bigger than themselves."

Dedicated to improving the human condition through the arts, Portraits of Hope conceives and develops creative national and international projects that merge the healing arts with inspirational public art. The program is aimed at brightening and enriching the lives of children and adults - many of whom may be coping with adversity, hardship, emotional or physical trauma, or serious illness - through their participation in creative, high-profile, one-of-a-kind projects.

Portraits of Hope was founded in 1995 by Ed Massey and Bernie Massey, continuing their use of art and poignant visual imagery for large-scale projects of social consequence. Initially developed as a creative therapy program for seriously ill and physically disabled youth, Portraits of Hope has evolved to include a diverse group of children and adults from various community programs and institutions.



The Soaring Dreams airship made its debut on the west coast, flying over San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge.