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Living Dream

LYSA ALLMAN-BALDWIN



After crossing the threshold, past the vibrant red-hued door, it is one of the first things to catch your eye.

A 22-inch LCD screen inside a gold-leaf picture frame runs a silent video of two children—each wearing a single, bright red, adult-sized Converse high-top tennis shoe—reading to each other on a big comfy couch. Moments later, a picturesque image of a flower garden flows forward over the children.

“Living Dream,” is more than just a thought-provoking artistic interpretation. It is about the ebb and flow of life.

A Tribute to “Nana”

Created by local artist Ira Kusnetzky, “Living Dream” is a gift from the heart for Gilda’s Club Kansas City in honor of his grandmother—“Nana”—who succumbed to cancer. The video, though silent, speaks for itself.

“When parents of children with cancer walk through the door, they know why they are there, and don’t want to be at the same time,” Kusnetzky explains. “For kids, they may be scared because they don’t understand what is happening to them. But they all see the ease and beauty of the children and flowers in the video and feel an immediate sense of hope and comfort.”

“Living Dream” makes a poignant connection to the mission of Gilda’s Club Kansas City (GCKC)—to provide a warm, welcoming place of hope, comfort, community, education and support for all who are impacted by cancer.

“Ira’s art piece not only serves as a welcoming beacon to all who come in our door looking for understanding, but it also highlights the whimsy of comedian Gilda Radner that is present throughout our program,” says Executive Director Gail Nichols.

“Gilda joked that having cancer made her part of an elite club that no one wants to be a part of. The piece reminds us of the impact Gilda still has on us as we work to see that no one needs to face cancer alone.”

Best known for her work on NBC’s “Saturday Night Live” and her signature bright red, Converse high-top tennis shoes, Radner died from ovarian cancer in 1989.

Her desire was to have places of support, comfort and resources for people living with cancer as well as their friends and

families.

“The idea is that the club is a special place where those going through cancer will laugh and be moved in so many ways,” says Kusnetzky, “and where we can hold the vision that one day, cancer will no longer be a part of our lives.”

To that Nichols adds, “No matter where people are in their cancer experience, from a new diagnosis, to long after treatment has ended, GCKC is a place to find understanding, information and support, from other people who know just what you’re going through.”

Gilda’s Club

Gilda’s Club Kansas City (one of 22 Gilda’s Clubs nationwide) is located just north of the Country Club Plaza on West 43rd Street. Opened in October 2011, it is a free-of-charge nonprofit and the first Gilda’s Club to open in Missouri or Kansas. For more information visit gildasclubkc.org

photo: Laurel Austin

