

Valerie Fund's Young Patients Inspire Redesigned Center's Fresh New Look



The redesigned Valerie Fund Children's Center is getting rave reviews from its most important audience — the young patients who regularly visit there to receive treatment for cancer and blood disorders.

Ask any of them, and they'll tell you about their favorite room or what makes the newly designed outpatient facility so special. There's the Infusion Cinema (*in photo at*



bottom right), complete with plasma-screen televisions, where they can watch movies while undergoing chemotherapy or transfusions.

Two treatment rooms bring the beach indoors with their creative use of furnishings. In one room, an examination table has been crafted from a bright yellow surfboard (*in photo at top*), while the other room's more nautical approach features a blue exam table fashioned like a boat deck. It's strategically positioned against a wall adorned with a large white sail, emblazoned with the letters "VF" in red (*in photo at far right*).



Focusing on the many facets of beach life through the eyes of a child, the new center places a major emphasis on patient comfort in a healing and positive environment.

"Now our kids have a place that's warm and comfortable, and where they can feel at home while receiving treatment — when they're really here more than they are at their own homes," says pediatric oncologist/hematologist Joanna Luty, M.D., the center's primary attending physician. "This will not only help with their treatment, but will also help them cope with their illness much more than any of us can imagine."

Valerie Center clinical director Susan Dulczak, N.P., credits Marjorie Tedesco of Rumson, the project's major benefactor, for being the creative and driving force behind the renovation. "Marjorie explained the importance of having a vision and going forward, and because of our vision and the help of Marjorie, we have a new and beautiful center."



Tedesco worked in conjunction with The Valerie Center's staff, Monmouth Medical Center Foundation and members of the community, who volunteered their time, talent and fund-raising support to the effort. She

turned the project into a family affair not only among MMC employees and Valerie Center families, but among her own family members. In fact, her son, Andrew, a New York City-based artist, designed and painted all the center's murals, with the help of his 9-year-old daughter, Abbey.

Perhaps the most candid comment and words of appreciation came from Grant Gallagher, 11, of Englishtown, a former Valerie Fund patient. "It's really tough fighting a disease, whatever you have," he says in a video

showcasing the redesign effort. "This center is really going to be helpful and I know that because I received treatment at The Valerie Fund. From everybody, thanks, and that comes from the heart."



The younger set of Valerie Center kids has taken a particular liking to the floor-to-ceiling wildlife murals that brighten the center's halls. A family of giraffes walking through slender blades of field grass greets visitors near the center's entrance (*in photo above*), and upon turning a corner, a mother elephant and her calf are splashing playfully in water along another wall (*in photo at bottom right*).

And patients of all ages, as well as family members and staff, are quick to point out that they have pulled up a stool at the Soda Shoppe's bar to enjoy a Slush Puppie drink and conversation (*in photo above*).

As one patient best sums it up with this simple quote: "It doesn't even look like a clinic."

Inspired by these youngsters and turned into reality by an outpouring of generosity, the redesign endeavor has breathed new life into the center, where hundreds of children with cancer, sickle cell anemia and other blood disorders each year receive outpatient care.

