

Communication Arts



EXHIBIT

Story Wall

The Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center (FHCRC) recently unveiled a story wall designed by Michael Courtney Design (MCD). Its purpose? To express thanks to the patients in the bone marrow research program. "One challenge was to develop the correct tone. The FHCRC team requested we focus not on the science, but on the patients who courageously volunteered for this research. Recognition walls often have an unemotional, corporate feel. We recommended a solution appealing to intellect and emotions, encouraging visitors and staff to absorb the story. The images, colors, materials and technology all support this," explained Mike Courtney, MCD art director. "At the project unveiling, patients were eager to view the installation, and many posed in front of it for photos with family and caregivers." Credits a FHCRC team member, "The final result is inspirational and moving, an everyday reminder to the public and employees why we do what we do."

Design Details

At 7' high and 17' long, the story wall immediately pulls in passersby with its rich color palette—a dramatic departure from adjoining donor walls—unique materials, and inspiring imagery. An etched metal panel provides somber contrast to the rich colors. Large magazine-style layouts present the program's overall purpose and history. The spiraling aluminum timeline holds acrylic nodes, recognizing the number of patient contributors at key intervals. A plasma screen rotates through photographs and biographies of actual patients, sharing their own or their family members' stories. The dynamic content of the plasma screen is easily updated with new patients and new stories.





1 Story Panel

MCD recommended breaking the complex story into smaller parts. The FHCRC team brainstormed key words describing the patient/family experience: courage, pain, gratitude, dignity, legacy, hope. MCD used these to guide the content and photo selection.

2 Timeline

The spiral timeline concept was a hit from the beginning. "Nodes" show numbers of patients treated with corresponding dates. Several empty nodes signify the ongoing nature of the study.

Debra Burgess/Mike Courtney/Margaret Long/Zach Shallcross/Ivan Silantyev/Larry White, designers; Gordon Todd, FHCRC, writer; Tom McMackin/Zach Shallcross, photographers; Turner Exhibits, fabricator; Michael Courtney Design (Seattle, WA), design firm.