

Who's **Who** in Vaughan

Colourful for a cure

Thornhiller puts brush to canvas to benefit cancer research charity

COREY LEWIS

Features

Jeremy Bortz doesn't want to talk about himself.

The Thornhill artist prefers to discuss his latest project, Flowers of Hope, and its inspiration, his sister-in-law.

Bortz used to visit her at Sunnybrook's Odette Cancer Centre as she wrestled with breast cancer. The hospital's drab, stark walls and hallways adorned with in-loving-memory-of portraits left him as emotionally drained as the facility's patients, he says.

"I remember saying to myself, 'If breast cancer doesn't kill her, depression will because there's nothing to really look at that's happy,'" Bortz said. "You never hear anybody go: 'Hey, I had a great experience in the hospital. The colour and interior were fantastic.'"

The grim realization propelled the acrylic painter into action. With Flowers of Hope, Bortz will contribute an original painting to a chemotherapy suite for every \$2,000 collected at Scotiabank branches in support of the charity.

The 8-by-8 inch pieces burst with colour and vivacity, just what patients engaged in the fight of their lives need, he said.

"Colour is inspirational to all people," Bortz said. "When you look at a white wall and you look at a yellow wall, the yellow wall will nine times out of 10 make you feel better. It's warmer."

Proceeds will go toward breast cancer research, he said.



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MASTERPIECE: Thornhill artist Jeremy Bortz is donating a lively original painting to Sunnybrook Hospital's chemotherapy suite for every \$2,000 donated to the Flowers of Hope charity, which supports cancer research.

This isn't the only charity Bortz has been involved with. He's contributed art and proceeds from art sales to the Children's Aid Foundation, the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, the Royal Ontario Museum and the Toronto Sick Kids Hospital.

Bortz has also auctioned off paintings he's created in front of a live audience.

"What inspires me is the joy that I see on people's faces when they purchase my paintings or the joy they actually get from it," he said. "That makes me continue to do what I do."

Bortz has brandished the paintbrush since his high school days in South Africa. After school, he teamed up with his brother in a variety of business ventures before immigrating to Ontario eight years ago. Until recently, the lust for acrylics was considered a hobby.

The transplanted artist creates simple portraits bathed in magnificent colours to lift his mood and take him away from the stress and gloom of reality, he said. His work doesn't hide deeper meaning.

"It's an easy read," he said of his art.