GP announces moving memorial to COVID victims to be unveiled in Brighton

Monday 14 June, 2021

Families, schools and NHS staff are being invited to help create a loving memorial to those who have lost their lives to COVID-19. The memorial, to be called, Souls to Paradise, will take the form of a giant flock of individually folded, paper cranes. The invitation to fold a crane is open to everyone, whether you have lost a family member, friend or colleague, or wish to mark the effect the pandemic has had on us all. Every crane received by the organisers will be included in the memorial. Each bird will represent a single life.

Souls to Paradise will be open to the public for a week from Tuesday, 27th July at The Spire, a creative space for theatre, live art, community collaboration and events, located in the beautiful Grade II listed former St Mark's Chapel in East Brighton, which has given its space free of charge.

Local artist, Ian Leaver-Blaxstone, is designing and installing the memorial display. Ian is an established artist who has appeared on Sky Arts Landscape Artist of the Year 2019, set up the first ever East Brighton Art Trailblazer event, and is a Featured Artist in this year's Brighton Artists' Open Houses.

Entrance to the Spire will be free. There will be collection boxes for local charities: Spire Arts and Cruse Bereavement.

By the time the display is ready, organisers hope to have more than one thousand cranes suspended from the high ceiling of the former church. Every person who folds a crane can add the name of a loved one they've lost during the pandemic or a personal message if they wish.

Dr Christa Beesley, a GP at Wellsbourne Healthcare CIC in Whitehawk, says,

"I started to fold origami cranes for health and care colleagues who lost their lives looking after others. I made them all in bright primary colours so that when they fly together they look a bit like an NHS rainbow. Now, we are inviting families, schools and the whole community to get involved by folding their own crane, for a friend or family member they have lost, or to mark the suffering we have all witnessed."

Since March 2020, **460** people have died in Brighton & Hove due to Covid-19. Across the country, more than **900** NHS staff have lost their lives caring for others. Many people have been living with grief and loss, often unable to attend funerals due to the lockdown restrictions. The Souls to Paradise Memorial is an opportunity to mark their passing.

Dr Beesley adds:

"In ancient Japanese culture, it was believed that cranes carried souls to paradise. According to Japanese legend, folding one thousand cranes can make a wish come true. More recently the cranes have become a symbol of hope in challenging times. When the flying cranes are suspended, people will be able to look up and take time to reflect and remember those who have died.

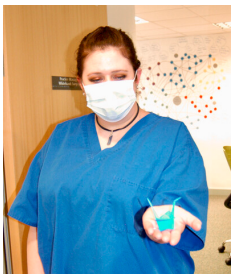
Faith Dodkins, Co-Artistic Director at The Spire Arts says:

"The Spire is pleased to be supporting Wellsbourne Healthcare CIC by hosting the 'Souls to Paradise' memorial in July. Our organisation, like so many others in the city, has been deeply affected by the coronavirus pandemic but we are thrilled to be taking small steps towards fully re-opening to the public this Spring. We cannot think of a more appropriate way in which to sensitively remember those we have lost and look forward to giving people the time and space to reflect on their personal experiences of the past year."

Hannah Yeomanson, Community Fundraising and Engagement Manager, Cruse Bereavement Care, says:

"Cruse is delighted to be involved in this special memorial, 'Souls to Paradise', to commemorate those who have died during the pandemic. We're so grateful to everyone involved in the project, which is a lovely way to support bereaved people locally. Anyone can get involved by folding a crane to display and we are so looking forward to seeing the final artwork in such a beautiful venue."

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Everyone can fold a crane. They are simple to make. The process of folding a bird in memory of a lost loved one or to mark the suffering we have all seen is a soothing activity. Every single crane received will be included in the display.

For instructions on how to fold a crane and where to send it to be part of the Brighton & Hove ‘Souls to Paradise’ Memorial, please visit www.wellsbournehealthcare.org.uk/community-projects/cranesforcovid/or send an email to community@wellsbournehealthcare.org.uk

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