

Straight Enough

Category: visuals

written by Scott Newport | March 6, 2015



Kevin Olney / Scott Newport

About the contributor:

Scott Newport, a volunteer with the Patient and Family Centered Care advisory council of C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, in Ann Arbor, serves both in his state and nationally as an advocate for families with sick children. "My biggest passion is family mentoring, and I have a special interest in supporting dads. I always know I've made a connection when I get an email that reads, 'Hey Scott, are you going to be up at the hospital this weekend?'" I believe that until we make a personal connection with a family, it's almost impossible to have those important and often difficult discussions. Sometimes, though, it's just talking about building fences."

About the artwork:

"One Sunday last year I sat in a hospital room with a young guy named Kevin Olney as he struggled to deal with his daughter's serious illness. A cowboy, he had traveled from out west to bring his daughter to the hospital. He told me how much he loves setting fence posts out on the prairie. He showed me a picture on his phone: the wandering fence posts seemed to stretch out forever into the distance as they rose and fell over the undulations. 'What do you use to keep the line so straight?' I asked. 'Yeah, Scott, they seem to be in a perfect line,' he answered. 'I guess I just have an

eye for it.' As we talked about the fence posts, he told me how beautiful they appear when they are snow-covered. He talked about the uncertainty of his daughter's health, and how he hates it when the staff use the phrase 'quality of life.' We talked some more, and when I got home I wrote a poem for him (below). Kevin's daughter passed away last month."

Straight Enough [excerpt]

*A cowboy from the west
a man of simple thoughts and seasoned hands of sweat
never lost on those long nights of tending
the wavering winds and teetering fence posts mute under the lonely stars
Now a thousand miles from home
in the big city and an even bigger hospital
his golden-haired daughter now at rest
his chair pulled tight to her bed, the oxygen tubing and IV line coil like a
perfectly set lariat...
From the nearby window seat
I just listen and then hear them both take simultaneous breaths
he whispers,
"Yeah, I guess just being here is enough."*