



**"Meghan"**

**Pencil on paper, 9 inches by 12 inches**

**By Chris Demarest**

Chris Demarest makes his living as an artist; for many years he was an author and illustrator of children's books, and recently he has chronicled people at work. One of his recent projects was following, off and on for about a year and a half, the pilots and EMTs of DHART—the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Advanced Response Team. The results of that effort were published as a feature titled "Help from on High" in the Summer 2008 issue of DARTMOUTH MEDICINE (see [dartmed.dartmouth.edu/su08/102](http://dartmed.dartmouth.edu/su08/102)). The DHART project, says Demarest, "led to an invitation from Jessica Laperle," coordinator of the Child Life Program at the Children's Hospital at Dartmouth (CHaD). There, he decided to do pencil portraits of the young CHaD patients; the results were framed and presented as gifts to the families to mark the child's hospital stay. "For the first time," says Demarest, "I was up close and personal from the patient's and family's side of things. Stepping into their privacy was initially hard." But he soon found the families' openness and stories "profoundly moving. . . . The portrait work took me into an emotional realm I wasn't expecting." But, he adds, "in most cases, kids are kids, sick or not. When I met Meghan"—the subject of the drawing above, which is published here with permission from her and her family—"she was sitting at a table playing cards with one of the staff. In spite of a mask covering her nose and mouth, the twinkle in her eyes said it all: 'Here is a fighter.' And she was a tough card player! I found that fighting spirit to be true with so many of the kids there who—in spite of masks, IVs, or wheelchairs—saw their stay as a bump in the road." Demarest is currently working with the children's hospital at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md., writing and illustrating a book about its therapy dog. ■