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helpful. Hunter's father is Huntsville police officer Jean Aiton.

Hunter said he selected periwinkle because the flower is used to produce two of the chemotherapy treatments that helped him get well. A small statue of an English bulldog is a nod to his own therapy dog, Ellie Mae.

"I got to be the boss," Hunter said about determining which flowers would be planted where in the bed. "That was cool. And I learned that you can't plant too many flowers because you've got to leave room for them to get bigger."

Last year, Hunter was diagnosed with an extremely rare non-Hodgkins lymphoma, which spread to his kidneys, thigh and areas next to his pancreas and liver. Treatment involved 100 hospital visits over 14 months and losing his hair, eating a severely restricted diet and not being able to play outside with his twin sister,

Hailey.

The family said he never doubted he would get well.

Hunter and his family have since raised money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, which they credit for his recovery.

"I know there are kids who have cancer and are scared," he said. "I want to help them live and let them know that I'm alive today."

The garden of cancer survivor Doris Riccelli, 46, may be the most unusual since the Garden of Hope project began two years ago. Pink sand is arranged in the shape of a ribbon, and stained rocks are arranged to replicate the shoreline of Bar Harbor, Maine, a place loved by her mother, who died of cancer.

She has a large pot of flowers with her mother's picture in it to honor her, and she's got another pot to memorialize her friend Linda Yost, another deceased cancer victim. Stuck in Yost's pot is a plastic piece of cheesecake on a stick, "because we loved to eat cheesecake together."

Riccelli's experience should remind women of the need for monthly breast self exams and to research their options if cancer is diagnosed. After suffering side effects such as arthritis, pain and weakness for four years due to her anti-cancer medications, she decided to stop.

That was two years ago, "and I feel great."

"Six years ago, I didn't know if I'd be here," said Riccelli, who works at the Huntsville/Madison County Chamber of Commerce. "So being a part of this Garden of Hope is priceless. It means I'm alive."



Photos by Bryan Bacon/Huntsville Times

Cancer survivors, from left, Vickie Sauer; Doris Riccelli and Hunter Aiton visit their honorary places in the Garden of Hope on Tuesday at the Huntsville Botanical Garden.

Intergraph honors 3 cancer survivors with Garden of Hope

Plots designed by trio represent their battles with the disease

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Look to your left, he said Tuesday morning.

Look to your right.

Chances are, one of them either has had or will be diagnosed with cancer.

With that somber thought, Intergraph President Halsey Wise introduced the three latest inductees into the Garden of Hope, a semiannual planting at the Huntsville Botanical Garden sponsored by the software company to honor cancer survivors.

The honorees were a boy with a rare form of lymphoma that only one child per mil-

lion gets and two mothers recovering from breast cancer. Each designed a flower bed to represent how they've battled the disease, and the hope they feel for the life still ahead of them.

"There's dianthus there right now," said Vickie Sauer, 49, a medical technologist who was diagnosed with stage one breast cancer in March 2007 after her annual mammogram.

"But in the spring, pink tulips will bloom. It will be like a new awakening."

Her daughter, Niki, who works at the botanical garden, nominated Sauer to be honored through the project.

"She's just had a really tough year," Niki said. "She's been so strong through all of it, and I thought this would be something nice for her to have."

Hunter Aiton, a 7-year-old Mt. Carmel Elementary student, used a pair of fire-

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Hunter Aiton
Cancer survivor

fighter's boots as planters in his garden, signifying his family's appreciation for all the help local firefighters have given in fundraising for cancer treatment and research. A stretch of blue pansies represents "the thin blue line" of police officers who were also

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