



**Cristina Powell**

## **Young artist spreads cheer**



November 26, 2006

**By Paula Peters**

When you are in the presence of Cristina Powell, it is impossible to be anything but happy. Case in point: the knot of frustration in the pit of my stomach that melted away when I met her in the lobby of Children's Hospital in Boston last week.

I was initially attracted to a display of paintings, or I should say more accurately, a burst of color that woke up my senses as if I had just stepped into a garden in spring bloom. Never mind that it was a cold, dank November afternoon, I was suddenly warm and overcome with a delightful feeling of peace stirred by this beautiful artwork.

The colors were brilliant - reds as if plucked from a rose, greens like new grass in the spring, and pink as soft as a tulip. And then I met the artist, 18-year-old Cristina from Kalamazoo, Mich., temporarily transplanted to Brookline for the next few months.

She was beaming with pride as people in the busy lobby were almost hypnotically drawn to her display of work.

A second before being caught up in the wonder of the colorful paintings, they were in a hurry to visit a patient, or late for an appointment, or rushing to get lunch.

Then suddenly they were in Cristina's world where she flashed her deep brown eyes and playfully tossed her thick black hair full of pink and green ribbons as she greeted admirers.

"Nice to meet you," she said in slow but clear speech, reaching her delicate hand purposefully over a table of reprints of her paintings to shake mine.

Born in Lima, Peru, Cristina was adopted by Leanne Powell of Kalamazoo when she was only four days old. A year and a half later, she was diagnosed with cerebral palsy and a movement disorder, which compromises her fine motor skills.

But it clearly hasn't compromised her talent and spirit.

When she was in the sixth grade, an art teacher gave her some paint and a canvas and Cristina discovered her unique artistic ability. "My teacher told me, 'Cristina, you have talent,' " she said, as a smile spread across her face.

