

# Strong spirit is conveyed in sculpture

By David Steinberg / Journal Staff Writer on Sun, Aug 28, 2011

The woman seems to be saying “I can, and I will, take care of us.”

She is leaning forward, carrying a burden basket and a child, heading into the unknown.

The Apache woman, her child and basket are depicted in Star Liana York’s bronze cast sculpture “Distant Thunder.” The sculpture was dedicated Wednesday in a newly landscaped site in front of the main entrance of the University of New Mexico Cancer Center. The landscaping includes boulders, small rocks and a stream.

“The heart of the piece was this strong spirit, but you could look into her face and know she would be able to handle the situation,” said York, a longtime Abiquiú resident. “It shows her determination.”

And the child, the artist said, is confident that everything is going to be all right.

“There isn’t fear because of its confidence in the mother’s ability to handle the situation,” York noted.

The title of the piece, she said, could be interpreted literally as approaching thunder in the sky, or figuratively, referring to hoofbeats.

She became interested in the history of the Apache people when she got to know the late renowned Apache sculptor Allan Houser, who lived in Santa Fe.

York said she had learned of a medicine woman “who ran with Geronimo. I wanted to do a sculpture of a woman facing a challenging situation.”

Paul and Lucy Roth of Sanibel Island, Fla., donated the sculpture to the cancer center.

“We watched it come into being at the foundry. It was delivered to our home in Santa Fe in 2003,” said Paul Roth.

He said it was neither feasible nor appropriate to take the sculpture with them when they moved to Florida. Nor would the sculpture be appreciated there, Roth said.

“We left the sculpture with Star,” he said.

The Roths learned that the cancer center was interested in acquiring sculptures but didn’t have the funds to buy them.

“We said, ‘Why not donate it?’ ” he recalled.

Paul Roth said they have a friend who is currently undergoing treatment at the center.

“Distant Thunder” is the third outdoor sculpture on the cancer center campus. There also are many pieces of art inside the center.

In remarks at the dedication, Dr. Cheryl L. Willman, the center’s director and CEO, said she believes art is part of the healing process.

Willman said that the woman in “Distant Thunder” “is stepping forward in her life.”

The Apache woman’s display of strength could instill a sense of resolve in the center’s patients and others who come to the center.

The identification plate acknowledging the Roths’ gift says it is “as a tribute to all who see a better tomorrow.”