

# TLC for Body and Soul

BY Alan H. Gepfert

## Art Display Program at New London Hospital Adds New Dimension to Health Care

PHOTOGRAPHY BY Paul Howe



Artists Vicki Koron (left) and Marian Biron have been instrumental to the success of New London Hospital's Art Program.

“It’s so nice to be able to go into the hall to admire so many inspiring paintings and escape my health concerns, even for a while.”

“This sure helps take the edge off getting stuck with those needles.”

“Such fun to see something on the walls that brightens up the space.”

There’s quite a bit of conversation happening in the halls of New London Hospital, and it’s not always about health care. It’s about art, thanks to the new art program at New London Hospital.

### Providing comfort

New London Hospital — with a caring medical staff, excellent facilities and management committed to continued advances in care — reaches out with a comprehensive concern for everyone’s total well being. There’s also a firm commitment to “soul.” The hospital recently dedicated an extended area for displaying artwork by the regional art community. While the displays serve everyone emotionally and visually, there’s more to it.

“There’s increasing recognition that

art can play a powerful role in providing comfort for everyone — patients, extended care residents, families, visitors, staff, even the general public — in a hospital setting,” says Lynda Reinish, manager of Volunteer Services and Donor Relations at New London Hospital. “The program is already contributing more to everyone in the hospital than we dared hope.”

Similar hospital art display programs were already underway regionally with excellent success, such as DHMC Arts, the arts program at Dartmouth-Hitchcock

Medical Center in Lebanon. Reinish was already familiar with Dartmouth’s art display program when she attended the annual art show at the New London Historical Society. Those exposures inspired her to create New London Hospital’s program. She proposed it to Susan Bryant, senior director of Marketing and Community Relations and, with follow-on endorsement from President and CEO Bruce King and other senior management, the program was born. It operates under The Friends of New London

Hospital, the volunteer organization that supports the hospital through active service and philanthropy.

At New London Hospital, there’s a new display every three months that taps four or five artists. Two program committee members — artists Marian Biron and Vicky Koron — set a theme, identify candidate artists, get their commitment, and arrange the display. These are organized projects — not just casual, ad hoc events. Most of the works are offered for sale, with part of the proceeds benefiting the hospital.

### Subjects, styles and media

Biron and Koron provided some of their own artwork for the kick-off display in November 2005. Koron’s alluring and sophisticated art spans oil, watercolor, mixed media painting, and woodblock printing. Biron’s widely collected watercolors concentrate on landscapes and floral studies, reflecting her profound appreciation for nature’s beauty, strong sensibility for color and keen eye for composition.

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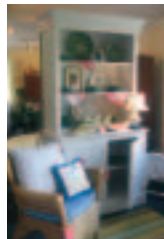


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Two other artists participated in that inaugural display. Townsend Howe's large paintings included soft outdoor landscapes with his trademark of lively gestural brush strokes. Bruce Parsons shared his deep attachment to Star Island and the Isle of Shoals with a 30-year photographic record of their enchanting scenes.

Artists work with a variety of subjects, styles and media. That's part of the magic. The four artists represented in the spring 2006 show utilized oils, watercolor and photographs. Grace Cooper is widely acclaimed for communicating a strong sense of peace and tranquility in landscapes of local and New England settings. One trademark of her oils is a wonderfully subtle use of color. Annie Ballin specializes in pen-and-ink and watercolor portraits of homes and farm buildings. Her charming style for rural scenes was demonstrated with watercolors that put you right in the setting.

John "Babe" Sargent — history buff and thespian — is entranced by steamboat travel on Lake Sunapee. His large oil in the display, with keen brush strokes and firm colors, made the viewer share a steamer's experience of working along the shore in heavy fog, the crew on tense alert to guide the captain.

Michael Pasqua's subjects were the unique result of more than 30 years of photographs from worldwide business travels. Using modern computer-based programs for photo editing, he's transformed those pictures to unique, softer, painting-like images. They carry out a visual journey "East from Here" — spanning the Charles River, Europe, Japan, California and home to the Sugar River — with water as the binding theme.

Five artists supplied the 2006 summer display. Yvonne Shukovsky showed collages, oil pastels and a photo. Her husband Hal provided a set of entrancing digital collages. Susan Parmenter's pastels included a painting of a horse's head you could pat along with still life works and outdoor scenes, all displaying her commitment to skilled drawing,

composition and light. Bill Peabody showed acrylics with vibrant colors and bold strokes of rural and community scenes ranging from here to Mexico and even Kenya. Alison Vernon's oils included florals and landscapes, all in her bold pallet-knife signature technique.

Certainly the program is fulfilling its goals. Staff members admire, enjoy and remark on the work during their busy rounds. And during their in-town errands, local participating artists are stopped for appreciative comments on the program and compliments about their works. "They've become amateur art critics," Reinish says.

Other staff remark that they miss the displays during the change-over breaks and even ask King, "When will the next one start?" King himself rarely misses an opening, and is pleased to report how New London Hospital's continuum of care is succeeding: "My office opens onto one of the display corridors. When I leave the door ajar during odd hours, I often see a patient viewing the

art. Early or late, Johnny-coated, pulling an IV trolley, they've clearly made a special effort to enjoy the display. I take real pride in that. I've been delighted with bringing both art and healthcare together into New London." **K**

*While a spare time stone sculptor for 38 years, Alan Gepfert served 20 years in management positions and 34 as business consultant with writing projects during more than 40 years. He established his own firm 20 years ago to provide copywriting and consulting services.*

*Paul Howe has been photographing professionally since 1980. He worked as a ski photographer for Waterville Valley from 1981 to 1986. From 1987 to 2005 he worked part time for the Argus Champion. Paul's images have been published in many magazines and he also photographs weddings and takes portraits. Paul has his own Web site at [www.paulhowephoto.com](http://www.paulhowephoto.com)*

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