

For Immediate Release:  
Tuesday, June 21, 2016

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## Dr. Esther Sternberg's Book, "Healing Spaces: the Science of Place and Well-Being", Inspired Just Completed Installation of Art in All of Vermont's Hospital Rooms

(Manchester, VT) Dr. Esther Sternberg's best-selling book, "*Healing Space: the Science of Place and Well-Being*" (Harvard University Press) inspired the Susan Sebastian Foundation to install original artwork in virtually every patient room in every hospital in Vermont.

The just-completed installation of an estimated 400 works of art will be on permanent display in about 400 inpatient rooms at Vermont's 14 hospitals. This project, which took five years from conception to completion, may be the largest of its kind in any state.

The paintings, worth a total of about \$450,000, include landscape scenes, flowers, children, and animals in watercolors, pastel, and acrylics. The most recent and final acquisition of 54 paintings was celebrated at an event at the Arkell Pavilion on the campus of the Southern Vermont Arts Center in Manchester, VT. The new artwork, valued at more than \$40,000, will be displayed in patient rooms at the Southwestern Vermont Medical Center in Bennington, VT.

In her remarks at the ceremony at the Arkell Pavilion marking the acquisition of the artwork, Sternberg said: "Looking at a beautiful view, whether a photograph or painting, activates parts of the brain rich in endorphins. It should have the same effect whether you're the patient, the family taking care of the patient or not ill at all."

The Susan Sebastian Foundation was founded in memory of Susan Sebastian, who endured a long illness looking at the bare walls of hospital rooms. Shortly before she died, Susan shared with her mother, Elise Braun, her wish that every hospital room in Vermont be hung with gentle, inspiring art by Vermont artists. Since Susan's death in 2009, Braun has worked to fulfill her daughter's wish, and the SVHC event was the capstone that marked the completion of the project.

A cousin who had read Sternberg's book sent it to Braun when she and Executive Director Gil Myers established the Foundation. From then on they used the principles described in Sternberg's book to guide their gifts of art to Vermont hospitals.

"Dr. Sternberg's work has had such a profound impact on the mission of the Susan Sebastian Foundation, on the patient experience in hospitals all over the country, and on how we, as a culture, envision healing environments," said Leslie Keefe, vice president for Corporate Development, Southwestern Vermont Health Care.

"I am deeply honored that my book was the inspiration for placing art in every room in every hospital in Vermont. The scope of this project is remarkable. When you write a book, you never

know the impact it will have, and to see my words made into reality on this scale is tremendously fulfilling,” Sternberg said.

“We are grateful for the generosity and inspired vision of the Susan Sebastian Foundation,” said Keefe. “This gift of art will make a tremendously positive impact for Southwestern Vermont Medical Center’s patients and their families.”

Although Braun was too ill to attend the celebration, Deb Clark, her close friend and a nurse, visited her the next day. Clarke said she shared with Braun “the overflowing rich event. It was a treasured time (as Elise) listened, looked at photos, and asked questions with a smile from ear to ear.”

“This final installation was the most celebrated. Bennington Hospital really outdid themselves. How great (it was that) people heard about Dr. Sternberg's work that inspired Gil and me," Braun said.

Braun passed away on Friday, June 17.

Sternberg said that, “Elise and Susan’s legacy will live on through art to help so many heal.”

### **About Dr. Esther Sternberg**

Internationally recognized pioneer in the science of the mind-body connection and the impact of place on health, Dr. Esther Sternberg is founding director of the University of Arizona Institute on Place and Wellbeing and professor of medicine and research director at the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine, University of Arizona at Tucson.

She has authored over 200 scholarly articles and two popular books, including best-selling *Healing Spaces: The Science of Place and Well-Being* (Harvard University Press). She has advised the American Institute of Architects, several branches of the U.S. government, Pope Benedict XVI, and was Senior Scientist and Section Chief at the National Institutes of Health 1986 – 2012.

For more information, go to [www.esthersternberg.com](http://www.esthersternberg.com).

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