

# LAWRENCE BUSINESS MAGAZINE

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*The* **IMPACT**  
*of* **ART**

# Healing Through Art

Artwork peppered throughout LMH Health campuses is intended to lift the spirits of patients, families and staff while promoting healing in those who need it.

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by Autumn Bishop, LMH Health,  
photo courtesy LMH Health

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**Singer Linda Ronstadt once said: "Art is for healing ourselves, and everybody needs their own personal art to heal up their problems."**

At LMH Health, art is more than decor—it is a vital part of the healing process. From calming murals to vibrant photography, the hospital's permanent art installations are designed to comfort patients, inspire staff and connect with the community.

Hospitals around the world are integrating art into their hallways because of its healing ability and calming nature. Art can show the beauties of life and open minds to new possibilities by creating hope and optimism. It not only provides a restorative and pleasant environment, but engaging in the creation of art can also play a role in improving medical outcomes and patient satisfaction.

And it's not just speculation, it's supported by science. Research from Drexel University in Philadelphia shows that just 45 minutes of creative activity—using collage materials, markers or clay—can significantly reduce cortisol levels, the body's primary stress hormone. Art provides other health benefits, as well, including:

- reduced stress and anxiety
- lower blood pressure
- reduced need for pain medication
- improved mood
- positive distraction for patients, visitors and staff.

Darren Moore, LMH Health digital content and brand manager, has long championed the role of art in health care.



*Blanca Herrada, Exhibitions Coordinator, Lawrence Arts Center; Lisa Grossman; Ben Ahlvers, Interim Executive Director, Lawrence Arts Center*

"Art becomes a silent partner in healing, offering peace where there is fear. It brings warmth and dignity, reminding patients and caregivers that they are not alone," he explains. "Art in our health-care settings is not just decoration, it's medicine for the soul."

As the organization prepared to open the West Campus in 2020, it was a priority for then-CEO Russ Johnson to feature the work of local artists. Funding was specifically included within the construction budget for that purpose.

LMH Health found the perfect partner in the Lawrence Arts Center. Interim Executive Director Ben Ahlvers and his team worked to identify local artists whose work would become part of the permanent exhibit at the West Campus. They recommended artists and helped select pieces that would complement the space.

The Lawrence Arts Center commissioned such pieces as Lisa Grossman's painting "Kansas River—Five Miles North," depicting an aerial view of the Kansas River. Existing works were also selected to appear in public spaces throughout the building.

"Experiencing the natural world is crucial to health and well-being, and is central to my work. One of my goals with this piece was to connect viewers to their place," Grossman says. "I can think of no better place than a health-care setting to display original fine art, and I commend LMH West for prioritizing the work of artists from this community for their collection."

The feedback from the community was overwhelmingly positive.

"The art installation on the first and second floors led to very positive comments from the patients, staff and community members," Moore continues. "We realized we were onto something and began to feature local artwork there and on our main campus, at 325 Maine."

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## Art Permeates LMH Health

Photos from employees have long adorned the walls of the hospital and its main campus. You may see pictures from Lawrence and surrounding areas, or you may be transported to the far reaches of the globe.

Throughout public areas of the health system, patients, visitors and staff are also able to take in pieces created by local artists. One of the most notable on the main campus is a large mural in the rooftop garden called "Kansas Symphony of Seasons," painted by the late Louis Copt.

The garden was renovated in 2023, thanks to a generous gift to the LMH Health Foundation by Bill and Marlene Penny in honor of their son, Nate. The final piece was Copt's mural.

Copt and the Pennys were longtime friends going back to their high school years together. The Pennys personally selected Copt as the muralist for the rooftop garden project. Their only request was that the mural must be a Kansas landscape.

Copt took four of his existing paintings, all real locations around Lawrence and Kansas, and put them together to create the mural. The Kansas scene transitions from winter, spring, summer and fall.

Copt said at the time that he was touched by all the employees and patients who came out and told him what a difference the mural made.

"For patients to be able to come outside and see the work, it really lifted their spirits," he said. "I can't tell you how many people came up and said nice things to me—it was really heartwarming and something I didn't expect. It's just amazing how many people the mural touched." ▲

*Kansas Symphony of Seasons, by the late Louis Copt*

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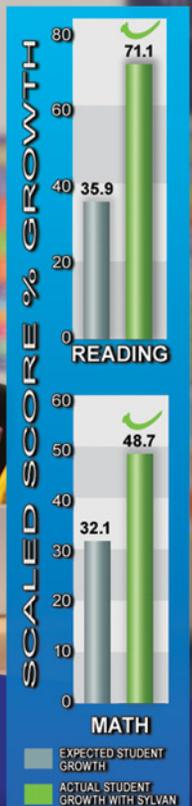
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