



Artists Wield Paint Brushes in Battle Against Lyme Disease - July 12

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Silent Auction of Artists' Connecticut Shoreline Landscapes to Aid Innovative UNH Lyme Disease Research Group

West Haven, Conn., June 19, 2009—Armed with little more than paint brushes and a wealth of creativity, more than 15 area artists—including Robert Reynolds of Stony Creek—will unite in the village of Stony Creek, in Branford, Conn., from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Sunday, July 12, 2009, to help a University of New Haven (UNH) researcher wage an unconventional research battle against Lyme disease.

In what has developed into a full-scale paint-a-thon, the professional artists—many of whom are alumni from the Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts in Old Lyme, Conn.—will set up their easels throughout the picturesque area and create small landscape paintings to be sold during a silent auction later that day. The auction will be held in the Stony Creek Gallery, 152 Thimble Islands Road, in Branford, from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. A suggested \$5.00 auction donation will be credited toward the purchase of any of the paintings created earlier in the day. Other Connecticut artists participating in the event include: Hannah Baldwin and Maureen Wilkenson, of Stony Creek; Margaret Dean, of Branford; Joan Jardine, of Sharon; Patricia Collins and Kimberly Ruggiero, of Madison; Ken Dorros, of Glastonbury; Adrian Waggoner, of New London; Jan Blencowe, of Clinton and Paula Billups, of Middletown.

The event is the brainchild of Kimberly Ruggiero, an accomplished artist in her own right, and owner of Ruggiero Gallery in Madison, Conn. Ruggiero was diagnosed with neurological Lyme disease in 2005. While attending a Lyme disease symposium at the University of New Haven in 2006, Ruggiero became interested in the pioneering work of Eva Sapi, Ph.D., a UNH associate professor, University Research Scholar and graduate program coordinator at the Department of Biology and Environmental Science. While the silent auction is taking place, Sapi will lead a community discussion, “An Update on Lyme Disease,” from 3:30 to 4 p.m. at the Willoughby Wallace Memorial Library, 146 Thimble Islands Road, Stony Creek, Branford.

Thirty percent of the proceeds from the auction will go to support the research of Sapi and the UNH Lyme Disease Research Group. Sapi is researching the possibility that *Borrelia*—the causative agent of Lyme disease—is capable of creating “biofilm,” a secretion that renders the bacterium very resistant to antibiotics, which may provide answers to why the disease is so difficult to treat. She has 20 years of experience in molecular biology and specializes in Lyme-disease related research, and her recent work includes researching the tick population in several Connecticut towns and studying the cystic form of *Borrelia*.

Due to the lack of accurate testing and a complex presentation of symptoms that may last beyond the standard treatment period, disagreement surrounds many aspects of Lyme disease, including its diagnosis, treatment selection and treatment duration. Recently, a controversial bill was passed by Connecticut legislators allowing doctors to treat chronic Lyme disease with long-term antibiotics without being prosecuted. Some opponents of the bill note that they believe chronic Lyme disease is a myth and are concerned about the lasting, harmful effects of long-term antibiotics. If the bill is signed

into law by Connecticut Governor Jodi Rell, Connecticut will be the second state to pass a specific Lyme-disease protection bill.

Artists interested in participating in the event may contact Stony Creek Gallery Director Susan Strickland at 203-208-1990 or visit www.stonycreekgallery.com.

For more information on Sapi's research, visit <http://www.newhaven.edu/unh/lyme/>.

A leader in experiential education, the University of New Haven is experiencing a historic and nationally recognized surge in enrollment. Founded in 1920, the University provides its students with a unique combination of solid liberal arts and real-world, hands-on professional training. UNH is a private university with an 80-acre main campus. The University has an enrollment of more than 5,200; approximately 1,700 graduate students and more than 3,500 undergraduates, 70 percent of whom reside in University housing. The University offers more than 80 undergraduate degrees and more than 25 graduate degrees through its five colleges, in fields such as sports management, nutrition, forensic science, music and sound recording, engineering, computer science and criminal justice. University College at UNH develops programs and courses to meet the emerging educational and training needs of educators, businesses and public and social agencies, focusing on academic excellence, convenience and flexibility. University of New Haven students study abroad through a variety of distinctive programs.

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