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Finnish Values, #1: Health

For those of you who have followed our earlier publications and webpage material, you may have noticed the phrase "Finnish values" pop up on a few occasions. What exactly do we mean by that? In fact, it would be interesting to hear your interpretation of what it might stand for, especially if you are a Finn! I for one believe that the common greeting "Terve!" (short for "I hope you are well" or literally "I wish you health") shows how important health is for Finns.

Now of course, almost every culture has their own version of this phrase. And the spread of gyms and all the talk about nutrition in the U.S is a good thing. Still, in this issue we try to offer you a glimpse of the wider Finnish approach to good health: exercise incorporated into daily life through the widespread use of bicycles and walking poles; some new techniques like yoga, as well as old ones like the use of the sauna for physical and mental stress relief; and the welcoming of new approaches, like the therapeutic application of art in nursing homes and hospitals. Space limitations prevent us from expanding on the huge topic of nutritious food in Finland, exemplified by the multitude of different healthy dairy products and types of fresh bread found in any local supermarket.

Much preventive health care research goes on in Finland: many "functional foods" like Xylitol (that prevents tooth decay) and the cholesterol-lowering spread Benecol originate there. Finnish medical research is widely published; today we introduce a world-class genetic researcher, Leena Palotie.

Naturally, not all health-related issues are perfect in Finland: death by suicide, murder, and alcohol-related accidents are far too common. Alcohol abuse, increasingly by women and youths, and consequent social problems, remains a challenge.

Because access to health care is on a continuous decline in the U.S, we also wanted to tell you something about the Finnish health care system. The issue of universal access is very timely here in the U.S, and something the Finns truly value. Perhaps there is something to be learned here.

Jaana Rehnstrom (MD)
President



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Health and Sauna Issue

Finland Center office opens at 47 Fifth Avenue

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The oldest artist club in New York, Salmagundi Center for American Art, has two galleries open to the general public 1-5pm daily. Our offices are located on the third floor, and will be open on weekdays 3-5pm and staffed by volunteers. If you are in the area, come in and look us up! Best to call ahead of time, 646-704-8000.

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Health Risks and Benefits of Sauna Bathing

When visiting health clubs and spas in America, we Finns are often dismayed by posted signs that warn against sauna bathing if one is under 18 years old, pregnant or has a heart condition or another serious ailment. In Finland, of course, children and pregnant women go into the sauna regularly, and it is widely understood that it promotes health in general.

A recent article in the Finnish medical journal *Duodecim* (13/2007) by Katriina Kukkonen-Harjula discusses the health risks and benefits of the sauna. It is a comprehensive review of 36 medical articles, with the vast majority originating in Finland and Japan. It is very difficult to obtain reliable data because standardizing all the elements that go into the process is challenging. Doing randomized, double-blind studies it is practically impossible. Still, it's safe to say that according to current knowledge, going into a sauna is safe for healthy individuals, from little children to seniors.

Sauna bathing also does not pose a problem for people who have a cardiovascular disease, as long as it is controlled with regular medication. During exposure to sauna temperatures, there is an increase in peripheral (skin) blood flow, which reduces the peripheral resistance and causes a drop in blood pressure. For this reason, it's not necessary or even recommended to take nitroglycerin medication or beta-blockers prior to going into a sauna. In the previous decade, Japanese researchers published several studies about the beneficial effects on cardiac insufficiency of infrared exposure at 60 degrees Celsius, similar to a low-temperature sauna.

One American study linked an increase in childhood malignant brain tumors to the father's exposure to high temperatures 3 months before conception.. In the same study, sauna bathing during the first trimester of pregnancy also caused an increase in childhood cancers. Until more is known about this potential risk, couples trying to conceive are advised not take hot baths or frequent the sauna. In Finnish studies, sauna bathing during pregnancy has not been found to pose a risk for congenital anomalies, but if the pregnancy is complicated by hypertension or pre-eclampsia, the temperature stress of the sauna can interfere with uterine blood circulation.

A more comprehensive article in English about this topic, by the same author, can be found in electronic format at http://ijch.oulu.fi/issues/653/653_Kukkonen-Harjula.pdf

Sauna baths can relieve the symptoms of chronic lung disease and some joint diseases. Hormonal changes occur in the secretion of noradrenaline, anti-diuretic hormone, growth hormone, prolactin, beta-endorphin, ACTH and cortisol. The sense of well-being and relaxation may be mediated by the hormone oxytocin, which has been found to decrease stress and anxiety and elevate the pain threshold. It may also promote healthier sleep through its effects on the secretion of dopamine, noradrenaline and melatonin. The Sauna may also be beneficial to your immune system.

Hyvia löylyjä!

Jaana Rehnström

Kalevi Ruuska: A Finnish Entrepreneur in America



At the age of 40, entrepreneur Kalevi Ruuska made the decision to try his luck in the US. Nine years later, he finds that America still shines with opportunities.

Ruuska was born in Liperi and educated first at the Commercial Institute of Varkaus and later at the Export Schooling Association. In his career he was initially driven ("for some reason," he says) to export Finnish saunas, loghouses, and construction projects.

Before coming to the U.S, Ruuska's longest work experience had been with

the Foreign Trade Association (Finpro) in Finland, with export marketing projects taking him all over the world—including the United States. From 1993 to 1995 he became very familiar with the marketing of Finnish sauna technology, a talent that helped him succeed upon his arrival in America.

Continued on page 6.

Health Care in Finland

One of the burning questions this election year is the status of health care in the U.S, and as Finns we cannot help but reflect on the benefits of the Finnish health care system. It has received less attention than some other European countries, and while lately coming under more criticism from Finnish citizens, the local system still offers many valuable lessons for health care experts in the U.S. Here are a few highlights:

The Finnish system is mostly, but not exclusively, a **public health system**:

In 1972, legislation was passed to create *health centers*, which cater to all basic needs of the residents of a certain area. Health centers have several functions, including overseeing "*neuvolat*" (see below) and school nurses, and delivering dental care. Their focus is on preventive care and basic health care, management of chronic disease and minor urgent care visits. Specialists perform periodic visits.

In smaller communities, health centers also have inpatient beds, most of which are used for long-term care of the elderly and disabled. In others, health centers reserve these beds from local hospitals. These hospitals also include more extensive patient resources such as emergency rooms and specialist clinics. After providing consultations, they refer patients back to their local health centers for continuing management.

Local communities also purchase specialist care services from regional hospitals, of which there are 20, including the five University Hospitals. Currently, there is a plan to introduce joint legislation for basic and specialist health care.

In larger communities such as Helsinki, the social sector is responsible for long-term care as well as day care for children and other social services. Some services are provided by the public sector and others are purchased privately.

The entire population is registered and covered. Some visits include a small fee.

The **NEUVOLA**- system ("advice center") began in the 1920s and was legislated into countrywide practice in 1944. Prenatal care is universal, and ensured by offering a "baby package"

or money as an incentive. As a result of early detection of problems and referrals to hospitals, Finland's maternal and infant mortality rates have long been among the lowest in the world. After birth, the "*neuvola*" visits continue for baby care, immunizations and growth monitoring, and offer a chance for early detection of problems in the home.

And who pays for it all?

In 2003, Finland was spending 7.4% of its GDP on health care alone. In comparison, according to the National Coalition on Health Care, the U.S spent 15.2% of GDP (16% or \$6700 per person in 2005) on health care alone. Of this, federal spending accounted for only about half. The rest was paid for by employers through private health insurance, and out-of-pocket by individuals — while leaving 47 million uninsured and many more under-insured.

According to 2005 figures, Finland spends 26.7% of its GDP on **health care and social services** (this number includes children's day care and care of the elderly and disabled). This figure equals about 8000 €person (about \$12 000) annually (Stakes 2007). Finland's spending is comparable to other European countries with a per capita income above the OECD average. Although health care doesn't come cheap, it seems that Europeans are stretching their penny further.

Because Finland has a dual system of public and private health care, and because some expenditures (eg. for some medications) are paid out-of-pocket, about 80% of this figure for health care expenditure is paid for by the government. It is collected from the citizens through progressive taxation and distributed according through the local political process. The average tax rate in Finland (according to the OECD) is 45.9%. For a person with an OECD country median income of \$26 000, this would amount to about \$12 000. For this, he gets comprehensive health care and social services, free education through the university level, subsidized local cultural services (such as libraries), and anything else the community leaders decide on.

"But 'Socialized medicine' means long waits for surgery"

Actually, as for the queues, they are not that bad. Several years ago,

a system of one's own primary care physician was introduced— "*omalääkäri*" — where every resident was assigned to a particular doctor. There is no wait for emergency care. A few years ago, in response to complaints about long wait times for appointments, a nationwide mandate to be seen within 3 days for urgent care and 6 months for surgery was instituted. According to the latest figures, less than 10% of patients now wait more than six months for their procedure.

Private system:

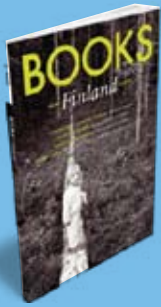
KELA insurance (national health insurance) is automatic for every resident; it covers a part of any fees paid to private doctors (currently 10-40%) and medications (50-100%). *There is a cap of 500 €per year for out-of-pocket expenses for medications; everything above that is free.* Medicines for chronic diseases are fully covered through a separate application process, in which the physician testifies that the patient is in need of ongoing medication.

Private insurance is available for purchase for very reasonable fees, and is increasingly popular especially in Finnish cities, eg. for children to be able to visit private pediatricians.

In some specialties, doctors move quickly into **private practice**. This career path is more lucrative and offers the option of scheduling one's own hours. Many private specialist clinics are covered by a network of doctors, who have positions at hospitals but like to supplement their income by seeing private patients one or two days a week after-hours. There are also a few private hospitals, mostly in bigger cities. As the population has become wealthier, many people now prefer to pay extra to be able to have their operation done by the physician of their choice at a private hospital. The two systems exist side by side, with about 80% of the health care employees being in the public system and 20% in the private.

Cost savings are achieved also because malpractice lawsuits are infrequent and the insurance fees consequently low. A national board disciplines doctors who make medical errors, and compensations for damages are paid through a public fund.

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Books from Finland

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The poet and translator Herbert Lomas demonstrates his virtuosity once again in this extract from Ilpo Tiihonen's humorous poem "Kesäillan kevyt käsitteellisyys" ("A summer evening's slight conceptualness", published in *Books from Finland* 3/2007).

In its 40 years, the quarterly literary magazine *Books from Finland* has published fiction or non-fiction by hundreds of Finnish writers, both contemporary and classic, in new translations. We provide our readers (in more than 60 countries) with a way of following events and developments in the culture from which literature grows. *Books from Finland* is an independent, non-profit journal, published by the Finnish Literary Society and supported by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. The subscription fee (4 issues) is just 28 euros (20 euros in Scandinavia and Finland).

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Yoga offers therapy through movement

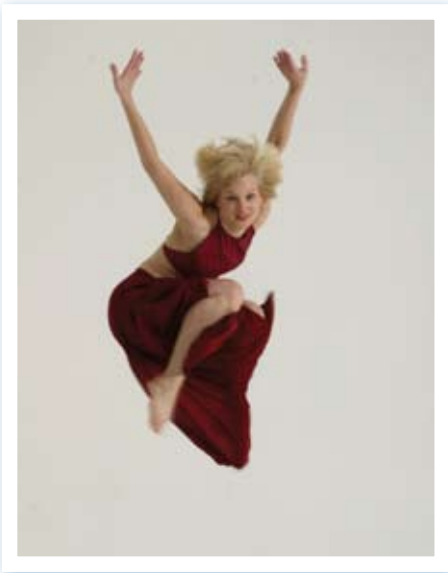
It's no surprise that Hanna Kivioja's extensive dance training has helped her body adopt and memorize the nimble positions of yoga more naturally than most of us. But her years of observing the movements of choreographers also prepared her, perhaps unknowingly, for the role of a yoga instructor. If a student has a tendency to stiffen his or her neck or place too much weight on one side of the body, Kivioja can detect the potentially harmful habit simply by watching him or her bend into a yoga pose. "People don't often even notice how tension collects in their bodies," she says.

Born and raised in Rovaniemi, Kivioja, 30, last lived in Finland during her high school years. She received her bachelor's degree from the London Contemporary Dance School in 2000, and moved to the U.S. shortly afterwards. She credits much of her drive to gather foreign influences to her mother, who traveled around the globe—literally—as a young woman. Kivioja currently dances with a number of ensembles in the New York area, including Choreographer Deborah Goffe's *Scapegoat Garden*, and works as a resident instructor at Union Square's Peridance. She also offers classes each Monday night at the New York Finnish Lutheran Congregation, giving local Finns a chance to study yoga in their native language.

Both in Finland and the U.S., yoga has taken a place as an on-demand exercise form; according to Yoga Journal's 2005 survey of 4600 Americans, 7.5% of U.S. adults practice yoga. Equivalent figures in Finland haven't been widely publicized, but news outlets and exercise professionals report an increase in yoga's popularity in recent years. Besides increasing flexibility, this exercise form has been proven to offer notable health benefits, such as increased circulation, an improved digestive system and toned internal organs.

"I initially started practicing yoga just to keep in shape physically," Kivioja says. "But I soon noticed that completing a yoga routine also helped me sleep better at night. I'm such a physical person that I can't calm down by just sitting and meditating. It has to come through the body."

Kivioja begins each of her classes with a short moment of relaxation. Slowing



down can help keep track of one's own well-being, she says, "especially in a city like this, where everything happens so fast and the volume is constantly so high."

Once Kivioja continues to more physically demanding yoga poses, she allows each student to adapt the exercises to his or her own skill level. In fact, she says, mastering a simple pose is a much more complex task than it appears. "It's a lot more demanding to keep one clean position with your mind focused than moving at a hurried speed and attempt tricks," Kivioja says.

During her career she has frequently encountered first-time students who assumed yoga to be a series of effortless stretches and found themselves sweating in agony at the end of the lesson. "Especially some of the men," she says and laughs. "What's best about yoga is finding that balance, realizing that it's not just about force or just about stretching your body."

Besides yoga, Kivioja has practiced the martial art of Wushu. While they have increased her strength, mobility and physical fitness over the years, she says that she ultimately was gravitated to both arts for their philosophical components.

"In dance, one doesn't often put focus on the spiritual side of it. It's more about accomplishment. It would be really nice to bring some of this deeper approach to dance as well," she says.

Laura Palotie

How Finns and Americans Exercise

North America's gyms might be packed and network channels full of ads for the latest exercise trends, but it's the Finnish population that appears to be ingrained with a greater sense of athleticism. In fact, for many native Finns, the lack of physical activity in America presents one of the most glaring lifestyle differences between the two nations. Finns tend to view themselves as naturally vigorous and outdoorsy, and frequently associate America with its much-publicized obesity problem. From statistical analyses, these stereotypes appear to carry at least some truth: 72 percent of Finns exercise at least three times a week, while in America the equivalent figure is 48 percent. Obesity is still a more widespread problem in the U.S., but has recently reached worrisome levels in Finland as well.

"Finns are practitioners of so-called 'basic exercise,' meaning we like to walk, cycle and so on," said Ossi Aura, PhD, program director at Suomen Kuntoliikuntaliitto (roughly translated *The Fitness and Exercise Association of Finland*). "We exercise more than most other nations."

According to the latest National Fitness poll, conducted by Kuntoliikuntaliitto, at least one in three Finns practices three or more forms of physical exercise. Three in four practices at least two. 37 percent classify themselves as "fitness exercisers," while 20 percent say to be devotees of so-called "practical exercise" (walking, working in the garden or doing other everyday physical tasks).

Finnish affinity for the outdoors comes across in the poll: more than 1.8 million of Finland's 5.3 million inhabitants go on regular fitness walks, while about 828,000 exercise by cycling. 747,000 like to ski. Although the all-American exercise form, the gym, hasn't yet entered the top three

in Finland, its popularity is growing: in 2005, more than 500,000 Finns exercised at the gym, while in 2001, only 165,000 described themselves as gym-goers.

In the U.S, physical exercise is a less popular pastime. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, 46.7 percent of women and 48 percent of men in America practice a recommended level of physical activity (the HHS recommends walking, bicycling, gardening or an equivalent moderate-intensity activity for at least 30 minutes per day, five days a week, or running, aerobics or another vigorous activity at least three days a week). Perhaps due to the nation's increased efforts to combat its obesity epidemic, more Americans have taken up fitness in recent years: from 2001 to 2005, these numbers have increased 8.6 percent among women and 3.5 percent among men.

Many available fitness surveys in the U.S focus on tracking the prevalence of obesity. Although the growth of America's overweight population has leveled off since 1999, the percentage of obese adults (body mass index of 30 or greater) is still 34 percent. In Finland, 20 percent of the population is considered obese, and the number is enough to worry many experts. The World Health Organization attributes the global rise in obesity to decreased physical activity, caused by increased urbanization and reliance on transportation. Even in Finland, the number of exercise walkers has decreased from 1994's 2 million to today's 1.84 million (this indicates an 8 percent decline).

"Exercise through everyday routines, like morning commutes and trips to the store, has decreased," said Aura, "although exercising for fitness has remained the same in its popularity."

Laura Palotie

Health Care in Finland

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Medical education and research:

Medical schools enroll students in numbers sufficient to cover the employment opportunities. The number of doctors per capita is higher in Finland than in the U.S. Although the system is geared towards producing generalists for the health centers, specialization is popular and often leads to doctorates, which are almost obligatory for being able to compete for desirable specialist positions. The national government allocates a certain sum from its budget to cover medical education and research, and the five university hospitals compete for their share of it. As a result, there are a lot of scientific publications coming out of Finland. Because the entire population is accounted for through a registration process, it is much easier to do long-term clinical studies. This leads to many doctors getting scholarships for post-doctorate study at higher institutions for medical research in the U.S and returning to Finland to teach and do more research.

Recent problems:

Because of insufficient compensation and strenuous on-call schedules, there is high turnover among health center doctors — one's "omalääkäri" may change frequently. To fill the need, recently a lot of foreign doctors have stepped in, and some communication problems have resulted. Nurses have long been underpaid, resulting in an exodus of them to higher-paying countries such as Norway. Consequently, the ones that remain in Finland are under more strain. This all came to a head and led to a strike threat in the fall of 2007; a last-minute resolution was finally reached. And to save money, as well as to control the quality of care, not all services are available at all hospitals. In some parts of already sparsely populated Finland, people have to travel long distances to reach medical care.

Jaana Rehnstrom



An Inherited Legacy

Raine Lehtoranta



A leading figure in Finnish genetic research and the recently appointed chair

of Human Genetics at the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute in Cambridge, UK, Professor Leena Palotie recently spoke with us about the extraordinary conditions the Finnish population provides for the study of genetics.

Why do Finland and Iceland appear to be particularly advanced in genetic research?

Both countries have meticulously recorded their populations for hundreds, even thousands of years. The immigration history of both is very well known, and the leaders of both countries have in past history instituted a system that enables us to track the family roots of each citizen (in Finland Gustaf Vasa was the first one to do this). In genetic research, this gives us an obvious competitive advantage on an international scale. If, for example, we can trace the roots of those prone to cardiovascular diseases to the same family lines, we can determine their genetic predisposition more quickly and reliably than if we used as study populations those living for example, in London or New York.

Is there something particular about the Finnish genotype and genetic predispositions that everyone should keep in mind when dealing with health care abroad? How about in planning a pregnancy with a non-Finn?

Finns have their very own variety of disease genes that by chance only were in genomes of our ancestors who inhabited this region (mostly from south and west and also from east). On the other hand, certain disease genes were not by chance selected in the Finnish population; some of these, like cystic fibrosis and Phenylketonuria are relatively common in other parts of the world. By chance, a predisposition for these diseases didn't appear in our ancestors' genotypes. It's good to know about the particular genes that Finns tend to carry, but in general it's only beneficial to bring foreign genes into the Finnish genotype. Our gene pool only gets richer as a result. You

can study the relatively rare diseases that appear exclusively among Finns on www.findis.org.

How has your own research of genetics altered your view of the roles that genetics and environment play in a person's development?

It has only increased my understanding of the fact that we inherit most of our qualities, and acquire various conditions. The dialogue of genetics vs. environment or life style is being examined in more detail through new methods in genetic research and, for example, through collaborative, international studies that use Finnish sample populations. Even though our genetic makeup remains the same throughout our lives, it isn't unyielding or its activity unchanging. How our genes are read in our tissues and cells isn't altered by our lifestyles or environment. A good example is obesity; a predisposition is definitely inherited, but without food, no-one gains weight. Similarly, one inherits a personality but develops a character. Our genotype sets the limits for our biological characteristics, but our own actions and the way we live are deciding factors in what happens to us in our lifetimes and how the message of our genotype shapes our individual lives.

You lived in the U.S for several years. How do you compare Finnish and American health care? How about their possibilities for scientific research?

The secret to the success of genetic research in Finland is largely a result of our one-of-a-kind population history and the records produced by our high-quality health care system. This is something that American researchers are truly jealous of. Our advantage in this field is based on the structure of our society, our equalized health care and our educated population. We can be really proud of all of these things. Meanwhile, however, American appreciation for top scientific research and knowledge is much higher. Funding, support and enthusiasm is clearly much stronger in the U.S than Finland. Americans also know how to cheer each other on and know how to work together better than Finns. I've had the privilege to study in top-notch universities in the U.S and combine the strengths of Finnish and American skill sets.

Jaana Rehnstrom

Kalevi Ruuska: A Finnish Entrepreneur in America

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"Coming here was a twist of fate," Ruuska says. "In 1998 I won the Green Card lottery and my wife and I decided we should take advantage of the opportunity." The move was made possible by Finpro's export projects, giving Ruuska work for the first few years. He initially represented Helo-Saunas of Saunatec, but soon took matters into his own hands and founded his own company. He has been working on it ever since. Ruuska describes it as a "one-man plus wife" company.

Ruuska also currently acts as a chairman of The North American Sauna Society, established last spring. The organization aims to spread knowledge of the tradition and present-day state of Finnish Saunas. Notable figures such as Osmo Lipponen, head consulate and consul of Finland in New York, were involved in its founding. Even president Martti Ahtisaari made an appearance at the opening event.

According to him, 15,000 saunas are sold each year in the U.S, though his own part in that figure is probably a few dozen. "The competition is fierce in this country, and there are many different producers," Ruuska says.

"The sauna is held as a luxury in the U.S, and its existence adds to the value of real estate," he explains. "Naturally we don't have anything against that, though it would be nice to see the sauna becoming more common in ordinary middle class homes as well."

Despite the hard work, Ruuska is satisfied with his move to the U.S. "This is a very interesting country with lots of things to do. The atmosphere is positive for business and as they say, America is full of possibilities."

Kalevi Ruuska moved to the USA with his family in 1999. In nine years, the sauna salesman has met the challenges of the new country and found his place in it. Kalevi is also on the Advisory Board of Finland Center Foundation.

www.saunasociety.org

Mika Horelli

Healing Walls Are Humanizing Hospitals

Close your eyes and think about your favorite place – it can be any place anywhere. Do you picture yourself at the beach? Or are you in the mountains? Or walking in the forest?

Surely your favorite place is not the hospital where you got your last physical done after procrastinating for months. Those white walls with random warning signs, the overwhelming odor of disinfectant, and the over-worked nurses avoiding eye-contact with patients and distressed families hardly is a place that first comes to mind.

Why must this place that is supposed to heal us feel so inhuman? It has been known for a long time now that our mind, like nature, has amazing healing power. This is what Rea Nurmi, a Finnish artist living in Connecticut, was thinking about when volunteering at the Yale University hospital to paint with sick kids a few years ago. She was planning to start teaching art and thought that volunteering at a hospital would be a good place to practice teaching—not to mention that they would surely need help there.

Watching how much the kids enjoyed painting, Rea found the volunteering experience very enriching. She managed to also involve the stressed and worried parents who practically lived in the hospitals with their sick kids, and saw how much painting helped them relax. The hospital staff also noticed the change painting made both in their small patients and the families that accompanied them.

Encouraged by the change she saw, one staff member came up with an idea to paint the walls of a dark MRI room hidden in the basement of the building. The room was in constant use but nobody liked it. Rea took up the challenge and she painted a

blooming meadow on the wall (see below). People loved it.

Painting was all new to Rea, as previously she had been only working with pastels, but she enjoyed it. Ever since this first wall painting Rea has painted around the U.S and the world, and has even attended international Health Providing Hospitals (HPH) conferences around Europe. She lectures about the importance of art in healthcare, and during the last ten years she has been turning walls into parks, beaches and blooming meadows in various hospitals around Europe. Hospital patients in Florence, Prague, Vienna and Bratislava can now find serenity her work.

In addition to “breaking down” walls in hospitals, Rea has also worked on outside murals in a school yard in New Haven in Connecticut. However, one of the most memorable experiences she mentions has been a painting job at a youth detention center in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She painted a window-sized image in the cafeteria with the help of the young residents. She calls this work “window of opportunity”.

Rea has also painted in several locations in her native Finland. Her career in painting in Finland took off in 2000 when her mother moved into an assisted living facility Patola in Helsinki. As a Christmas gift to her mother, she wanted to add some color and light into the completely white entrance hall of the facility, and covered the white lobby with blue skies and trees. The residents of Patola Home were so pleased with this present that they called one of the national



Physical therapy area in a hospital in Pori, Finland.

nursing homes, but also in hospitals all around Finland. In addition to working on murals, Rea is an exhibiting pastel artist and continues to teach art to both groups and individuals.

Rea first started painting the walls on her own but she quickly noticed that staff and patients were very keen on helping her and she then invited them to join in on the work. This approach proved to work very well and has been very therapeutic for both staff (especially stressed-out nurses) and patients. Many who have participated in Rea's work have continued to paint on their own afterwards.

As lobbies and entrances in any hospital tend to be little more decorative, Rea mostly paints the examination and waiting rooms where people, both staff and patients, spend most of their time. These are the places where people are in a need of a comforting environment – it's there where patients sit and wait and linger in-between sickness and health and are in need of positive energy and some human touch.

Art is not supposed to be the privilege of the rich and famous. Art should be part of everybody's life and especially during difficult moments in life where hope has almost been lost, it can bring positive energy to people and help their recovery process. Observing beauty and creating art is very therapeutic, and it's for everybody: It's about expressing oneself and about bringing back the human touch into this über-technical world.

To see more of Rea's work, go to: healingwalls.com

Katja Rouru, New York



Before...



after

TV channels (MTV3), who then did a piece on the artist who had transformed the health facility by bringing in a sense of nature. After the first painting in Helsinki, Rea has been commissioned to paint walls mainly in



Finland Center Foundation

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Join Finland Center as a Member!

The goal of **Finland Center Foundation** (FCF) is to be the meeting point of Finnish and American culture, commerce and community. FCF supports current Finnish-American organizations in the New York Metropolitan area and the creation of new ones by striving to provide physical space, and support for their activities, in the present and for generations to come.

Now you can become a member of our organization and help support ongoing work to secure a permanent home away from home in New York for Finns and all friends of Finland! This project is for you, me, our children and our friends...**JOIN TODAY!**

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More to come – and the more members, the more benefits we will get!

» **Finland Center Foundation is recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization. All donations are tax-deductible and very welcome.**

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