

# Outlook

3RD QUARTER FY10

## Memorial Dedication Ceremony honors those buried at Bryce Hospital

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# Memorial Dedication Ceremony honors those buried at Bryce Hospital

Also served to increase awareness about preservation

Since 1861, thousands of men and women who died while residents of Bryce Hospital were buried in the Bryce Hospital Cemetery. While an untold number of the graves are unmarked, many are marked by a simple stone inscribed with a number. Like many mental health facility cemeteries across the nation, the cemetery has suffered years of shameful neglect and abhorrent vandalism. In an effort to depart from the past and venerate those souls buried at Bryce Hospital, the Bryce Hospital Historic Preservation Committee recently held a special memorial dedication ceremony at the chapel on the Bryce campus in Tuscaloosa.

The ceremony was open to the public, and had more than 300 people in attendance. The purpose of the ceremony was twofold. It served as an opportunity to bring closure or comfort to families with

loved ones buried at Bryce and to show that these individuals are remembered. In addition, the ceremony also raised awareness of the need to preserve the hospital's four cemeteries. A color guard opened the ceremony with a procession and presentation of colors and was followed by ADMH Commissioner John Houston who welcomed everyone to the ceremony. Commissioner Houston set the tone for the event when he remarked, "We want to appropriately honor the lives of those patients whose final resting place has not received the respect they deserve."

After an invocation by Dr. Karl Stegall, vice chair of the ADMH Board of Trustees, Dr. Sue B. Walker, Poet Laureate of Alabama, shared a poem she wrote specifically for the event entitled "In Remembered Lives We Live Anew." Next, Larry Fricks, nationally acclaimed consumer advocate for people with mental illnesses, addressed the crowd as keynote speaker. Fricks led a consumer

movement to restore the neglected Central State Hospital cemetery in Georgia that saw more than 30,000 graves being restored.

Following Fricks's keynote address, consumer songwriter Ben Arthur, took the stage to perform "Heavy Burden," a song detailing his experiences with a mental illness. This performance provided the lead-in to a brief history of Bryce

Hospital and its cemeteries given by ADMH Historian Steve Davis. A moment of silence was led by Brigadier General Frederick J. Johnson, assistant adjutant general in the Alabama Army National Guard.

Dr. Tom Hobbs, chairman of the committee, had the distinct pleasure of unveiling four historical markers that had recently been placed at each of the four cemeteries as well as an artist's rendition of a monument that will serve as the centerpiece of the proposed memorial site. The four markers were donated by families of NAMI Alabama, the descendants of Drs. W.D. and R.C. Partlow, and the Bryce Hospital Historic Preservation Committee. The monument's design and inscription are based on concepts by Jon Brock, Sister Lucinda Claghorn and William Ruff, and it will be placed in public view at one of the cemeteries. The inscription will read "We honor the memory of all those buried at Bryce Hospital. Though many are anonymous, they are not forgotten. We respect their heroic battle with mental illness. Those who suffered yesterday enlighten us and open doors once sealed. Let us now remember their struggle so that we may live better lives today, as our children will surely do tomorrow."

What many people consider an event that was long overdue was the department's first step toward demonstrating a commitment towards honoring consumers buried at Bryce. Following the ceremony, refreshments were served and tours of the historic 150-year-old main building at Bryce were given. Davis estimates that more than 80 people toured the building and learned even more about the rich history of Bryce Hospital. Davis says, "Despite having well known speakers, the poet laureate of Alabama and an original song from a consumer, the highlight of the ceremony for me was the interaction with consumers and families before and after the ceremony confirming we had reached our goals of raising awareness and bringing a sense of closure for many families." 🌟

## Help Us Create the Bryce Hospital Cemetery Memorial Garden!

If you would like to join with the Bryce Hospital Historic Preservation Committee to erect a cemetery monument and create the Bryce Hospital Cemetery Memorial Garden, there are two ways you can help!

### Option #1: DONATE A MEMORIAL OR HONORARY BRICK

A memorial brick contains an engraved inscription that pays tribute to a deceased loved one, friend or significant other (the deceased individual does not have to be someone who was a patient at Bryce Hospital). An honorary brick pays tribute to a living individual. The brick will be placed in a walkway near the monument in the memorial garden where it will remain in perpetuity.

### Option #2: MAKE A MONETARY CONTRIBUTION

If you do not wish to donate a memorial or honorary brick, you may make a monetary contribution in any amount. A donation form is available online at [www.mh.alabama.gov/BryceHospitalProject/Documents/DonationForm.pdf](http://www.mh.alabama.gov/BryceHospitalProject/Documents/DonationForm.pdf). If you have any questions about the memorial garden or about how to make a donation, please contact Steve Davis, ADMH Historian, at 205-759-0711.