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EDITOR'S PICK    FEATURED

# Work progressing on mental health housing

Adam Smith    Feb 25, 2016



Courtesy photo

The concrete slab that will be the foundation for a mental health housing development in Athens sits ready for development the Mental Health of North Central Alabama said he hopes the project will be completed by fall.

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A little more than a year after ground was broken on a new residential facility for mental health patients in Athens, an official said the project is progressing and should be done by fall.

Bill Giguere, development officer for the Mental Health of North Central Alabama, said Phase 1 of the three-phase project was completed in mid-January. The first phase included pouring the concrete foundation and running water and sewer lines.

A bid for the second phase, which includes the bulk of the construction, could be awarded by the end of next week. Giguere said Phase 2 should be wrapped up this spring and the final phase by summer's end.

"The foundation is the most critical part of any building, and the groundwork is laid," he said.

The nine-bed triplex home at 1307 E. Elm St. in Athens is one building, but technically three town homes with each containing three bedrooms, three bathrooms, communal living space and a kitchen. The facility will cater to adults with schizophrenia and manic-depressive disorder, though all residents will have daily contact with case workers from the Mental Health of North Central Alabama. The MHCNCA operates a counseling center, which is near the future triplex.

"This is for adults who have serious mental illnesses who can live semi-independently," Giguere said. "Because it's next to the counseling center, we can check on them every day."

He said most of the residents would attend day programs at the counseling center. They'll be picked up in a van, attend the programs and be returned home to live their lives like anyone else.

"There will be daily contact (with case workers) to make sure they're taking their medicine," he said.

Cooperative effort

The triplex is being funded by the MHCNCA and the Foundation for Mental Health in North Central Alabama. It also received grant funding from the Steelcase Foundation, Daniel Foundation of Alabama, the city of Athens and the Limestone County Commission.

Giguere said the impetus for the project was the need for housing for mentally ill persons who do not need round-the-clock care.

“We were looking down the road, but no one really realized how many cuts there would be (in mental health services) and the tremendous need for housing,” he said.

### Fundraiser

The Foundation for Mental Health is in the planning stages for its annual golf tournament, which is the foundation's largest fundraiser. The tournament will be held Sept. 22 at Canebrake Club in Athens. The event raised \$21,000 last year, Giguere said.

Those seeking more information about the tournament can call him at 256-260-7325.

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