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**GRANT UNDERSCORES IMPORTANCE OF BRYCE HOSPITAL
CEMETERY PRESERVATION**

MONTGOMERY – Since 1861, Bryce Hospital in Tuscaloosa has served Alabama citizens with mental illnesses. The hospital design became an architectural model for other psychiatric hospitals across the nation into the early part of the 20th century. For 150 years, patients have come to Bryce, and most returned home after a period of respite and treatment. Others spent the remaining years of their lives there and at death, were either sent home for burial or interred in one of the four Bryce cemeteries.

In 2008, the Alabama Department of Mental Health established the Bryce Hospital Historical Preservation Committee. Much of the committee's work has focused on the preservation of the Bryce cemeteries. Commissioner Zelia Baugh recognizes the committee's importance and steadfastly supports its work. These preservation efforts received a boost recently through a grant from the Alabama Historical Commission. The commission voted on September 21, 2011, to support preservation through a grant of \$15,880. Specifically, the grant will enable ADMH to conduct an intensive survey and mapping project of several hundred marked and unmarked. ADMH will work with the University of Alabama's Office of Archaeological Research to conduct the Old Bryce Cemetery survey and mapping project. The survey will include photographic documentation of identified gravesites, historical research on individual graves, the use of ground penetrating radar identification and 3D mapping of the cemetery, preparation of a computer inventory of all identified gravesites, and the development of a plan for marking and maintaining currently unmarked graves, and the cemetery as a whole.

Historically, the Bryce cemeteries have seen varying levels of care, and until the creation of the Historical Committee there had been extended periods of neglect and vandalism. In addition to focusing their attention on the cemeteries, the committee's goals include other preservation efforts as well, including preservation of the Kirkbride/Slone original white domed hospital and the eventual establishment of a mental health museum. These considerations were taken into account when the sale of the Bryce campus to the University was concluded.

Other states have begun to recognize that the neglect of institutional cemeteries is wrong. It sends the message that human life has little value. This grant is another step in preserving the dignity of those who lie in overgrown unmarked graves or under a marker with only a number.

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