

Shelby Baptist's new senior care center featured at South Shelby Chamber Luncheon

By Stephanie Brumfield

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By **STEPHANIE BRUMFIELD / Staff Writer**[mistake](#)

COLUMBIANA – Executive Director of Psychiatric Services with Baptist Health Services Zelia Baugh spoke at the South Shelby Chamber Luncheon Aug. 1 and discussed one of Shelby Baptist's newest services – a senior care unit focused on geriatric psychiatry.

Baugh, who has more than 20 years of service in health care and formerly served as the Alabama Mental Health Commissioner, joined Shelby Baptist last August before opening the brand-new, 20-bed unit Jan. 1.

Baugh began her speech with a question: "Why do we need to care (about this new center)?"

In 2012, 5.3 million Americans were living with Alzheimer's or dementia, two diseases addressed by the new senior care unit, she said.

By 2025, the number is expected to increase by 30 percent to 6.7 million, she said.

Alzheimer's is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States, she said.

As the fastest growing county in the state with residents living longer and longer, Baugh said a service like this is greatly needed.

"We have to be ready as a community and system to meet that growth," she said. Before, Shelby County residents had to drive to Brookwood for such a service, Baugh said.

The new senior care unit is designed to treat all psychiatric disorders, including anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, Alzheimer's, dementia and more.

Baugh said the staff takes a "team approach" treating the mind, body and spirit using a range of skills. The center employs an RN, a psychiatrist and a recreational therapist, among others.

Baugh said one of the best aspects of this new service is the ease with which a person can get referred. Patients can be referred by family members or doctors in less than an hour, she said. One simply has to call the center, explain the prospective patient's situation and wait about 45 minutes for nurses and the staff psychiatrist to determine whether the patient is a good fit.

"Early detection is critical," Baugh said.

The senior care unit also provides caregiver counseling for family members.

The South Shelby Chamber Luncheon was sponsored by Shelby Baptist Medical Center with catering by Ezell's Catfish Cabin of Calera. For more information, visit Bhsala.com/Shelby.