

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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N.D. State Hospital celebrates 125th year; hosts activities May 5-7

BISMARCK, N.D. – Established prior to statehood, the North Dakota State Hospital in Jamestown marks its 125th anniversary on May 1, 2010. To celebrate, the hospital is hosting activities May 5 – 7. Some events are open to the public including guided tours and the opening ceremony, which Gov. John Hoeven will attend, and other activities are private functions for patients and current and retired employees.

“We invite the public to come and see the State Hospital,” said N.D. Department of Human Services Executive Director Carol K. Olson. “This fully-accredited specialized hospital is North Dakota’s treatment safety-net for people with severe mental health and substance addiction needs. Dedicated staff members work very hard to stabilize and support people in their recovery.”

May 5-7 Activities

Hospital Superintendent Alex Schweitzer said the public is encouraged to attend the Opening Ceremony **May 5**, at 10 a.m. in the All Faiths Chapel. It will include brief comments by Gov. Hoeven and other dignitaries and a program about the hospital’s history. Tours of the campus and facilities will follow at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. and will conclude at the newly established State Hospital Museum, which features artifacts, historical pictures, and more.

May 6 activities include a private High Tea for alumni staff at 2 p.m. at the Superintendent’s House on the campus. Later at 7 p.m., the hospital is hosting a private social with music and refreshments for patients, current staff, and alumni staff. Public events that day include tours at 10 a.m., 1:30 p.m., and 3 p.m., and a *Miles for Mental Health Walk* sponsored by Mental Health America of North Dakota that begins at 5:30 p.m. The mile-long route will pass by the historic State Hospital Cemetery. Registration begins at 5 p.m. at the Old Sunland/Hogan Park off Business Loop East.

On **May 7**, the hospital is hosting a private picnic from noon to 2 p.m., for staff, patients, and patients’ guests at the Learning Resource Center. Public tours will be offered at 10 a.m., 2 p.m., and 4 p.m. Hospital staff will bury a time capsule at 3:30 p.m. in front of the LaHaug Building. This public event will be followed by closing ceremonies.

Individuals interested in participating in one of the scheduled public tours on May 5-7 should stop at the fourth floor of the Learning Resource Center prior to a scheduled tour.

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The North Dakota State Hospital History Project, which involves the State Hospital and Mental Health America of North Dakota, was established to mark the 125th anniversary and to share the hospital's history by developing both an on-site and virtual museum (www.ndshmuseum.org/history/index.html), as well as a book: *One Hundred-Twenty-Five Years: The History and Chronology of the North Dakota State Hospital*. The museum project was made possible through a grant from the State Historical Society of North Dakota. The book, coauthored by Sally Van Beek, Nancy McKenzie, and Alex Schweitzer, was produced with private funds raised by the hospital's Employee Promotions Committee.

Hospital History

Once a fully-functioning, self sustaining farm-like setting, the North Dakota State Hospital has changed significantly over the years. Because the campus was designed using a cottage plan with separate buildings without bars or grated windows, when it opened, the hospital varied greatly from existing facilities on the east coast.

The hospital owned a dairy business, raised crops, and processed its own meat. Many staff lived in housing on the grounds, and the campus was so self-sufficient, it had its own fire truck.

The hospital reached its peak population in the early 1950s with a census of about 2,100 patients. The advent of psychotropic medications and regional services has transformed the hospital and its services.

North Dakota now strives to treat people with disabilities in their communities using outpatient treatment through the Department of Human Services' regional human service centers and other service providers.

Today about 265 people are receiving treatment at the State Hospital. Of these individuals about 120 have been admitted to the hospital for inpatient mental health and addiction treatment services. The hospital's secure unit, which opened in 1998, is currently providing treatment to 57 civilly-committed sexually dangerous individuals and is housing about four others for evaluations. The hospital also is providing addiction treatment services on-site to about 84 other individuals who are under the care and supervision of the N.D. Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation in the hospital's 90-bed Tompkins Treatment Center located on the hospital grounds.

The hospital serves people whose needs exceed existing community resources. While some patients have chronic ongoing needs and remain in care longer, many are discharged to community services after they are stabilized and make suitable progress in their initial rehabilitation and structured treatment. It isn't uncommon for hospital staff to begin working with community providers shortly after a person is admitted in order to transition the patient to community services. Transitional housing is provided on the campus and is coupled with supported employment services to help some people prepare to return to community living.

Some regions of North Dakota do not have not-for-profit community hospitals that provide inpatient mental health and addiction treatment services. The State Hospital is the primary provider of inpatient mental health and addiction treatment services for the Devils Lake, Dickinson, Jamestown, and Williston regions of the state.