



MENTAL OUTLOOK

A Publication of Mississippi State Hospital Winter 2011 Volume 19 Number 4

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COMMUNITY SERVICES CLIENTS FACILITATING NAMI CONNECTION SUPPORT GROUPS

Most people know what a relief simply having someone to talk to can be in a time of trouble. Just getting some thoughts off the mind and hearing encouraging words from friends can make a huge difference.

Some clients served through the Mississippi State Hospital Community Services Division don't just know that for themselves, they've been able to help others realize that simple truth as well. Tysonya Coleman, Mitch Drake and Jerry Mosley have been certified to facilitate recovery support groups through NAMI Connection, a recovery support program for people living with mental illnesses. Mosley has been a facilitator for the groups for about two years, and following his lead, Drake and Coleman just recently became certified.



"These groups really support the idea that recovery is possible, through the group wisdom and the group sharing with one another," said Sandra Cairon, Coordinator and State Trainer for the NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Connection Recovery Support Groups. "It's a wonderful model, absolutely wonderful. It's been a very successful group for us."

The groups offer a casual way for those living with mental illnesses to come together, share their stories of success and recovery, the challenges they find in daily life and the encouragement and support that will help them get through those challenges.

Mosley got his start actually facilitating a group. He hadn't been attending one at all before he stepped into a leadership role. He was a little nervous first starting out, but it didn't take long before it became more natural, he said. Coleman and Drake were in his group, which led to them becoming facilitators themselves.

"We were kind of under his wing," Coleman said.

Drake said being in a group before becoming a facilitator gave them a good sense of what it would take to be successful when they stepped

into a bigger role in the group.

"We deal with a lot of issues, and it didn't take that long. You just ask some people. Hopefully they want to talk about their issues, but you just try to make them feel welcome. If they feel like they have something they want to say, they can just say it," Drake said.

Mosley said someone had asked him if he knew of any candidates who would make good facilitators, and he immediately thought of Coleman and Drake.

"Right off the bat, I thought they would make good facilitators. I asked if they'd like to become facilitators, and they said they'd give it a try," Mosley said.

Both had come to groups, shared their thoughts, respected everyone and obviously cared about the group, he said. Those simple traits were exactly what they need to help lead a group. Unlike with Mosley, who was facilitating a group by himself for the first year, Drake and Coleman will be able to work together as a team, helping each other to help other people.

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OUTLOOK

MISSISSIPPI STATE HOSPITAL

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MISSION

Mississippi State Hospital facilitates improvement in the quality of life for Mississippians who are in need of mental health, chemical dependency or nursing home services by rehabilitating to the least restrictive environment utilizing a range of psychiatric and medical services which reflect the accepted standard of care and are in compliance with statutory and regulatory guidelines.

VISION

We will be a customer-driven organization.

CORE VALUES

Respect - Teamwork - Trust
Communication - Commitment

MEMBER OF

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American Hospital Association
Mississippi Hospital Association
Southern States Psychiatric Hospital Association

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A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR...

As you can see in the pages of this issue of Mental Outlook, 2010 was a busy year for Mississippi State Hospital, and 2011 shows no signs of slowing down. We are already planning some of our annual events, such as the Employee of the Year program and the Annual Legislative Breakfast. Both of those programs recognize people very important to Mississippi State Hospital – the employees who deliver quality care and service and our

legislators who help make that care and service possible. You can read more about those events in the upcoming pages.

You will also see what a great year 2010 was for us. Several of our Community Services clients have achieved a remarkable distinction and become facilitators for NAMI Connections support groups, and Community Services also had a strong showing at the NAMI-Walks event this past November. As usual, the holiday season was a busy time of the year, with hundreds of people from more than 100 volunteer groups visiting the hospital to spend time and spread joy among our patients and residents. The giving spirit of our community was truly displayed on Santa Day, when our volunteers gathered to personally deliver gifts to those on the hospital campus and at Community Services in Jackson. I appreciate their dedication, our patients and residents appreciate it, and I hope you reading this can appreciate it as well. Thank you.

Sincerely,


James Chastain

Friends of MSH, Inc.
would like to say

Thank You

to our

**CORPORATE
SPONSORS.**



While the NAMI Connection groups are casual and relaxed, they still have their own strict guidelines that are followed. All facilitators spend about two-and-a-half days in training to help give them the resources they'll need, and the groups do have a set structure.

"We start out by going through the group guidelines first, at every meeting," Cairon said. "For instance, one important guideline is that we can't judge someone else's pain as less than our own."

Cairon also said that even though things can get tough sometimes, and there's plenty of potential for negativity to come up during a meeting, they always make sure to end on a positive note.

"One of the biggest comments made is 'I know I'm not alone,' which is huge for all of us," she said. "It's wonderful to see people pulling together and helping each other."

Mosley, Coleman and Drake summed up their feelings similarly.

"Getting out and being among other people with mental illness lets you know you're not the only one with these health issues," Coleman said.

Drake said that once he began attending, the atmosphere of the groups makes it easy to get involved.

"Everything just kind of starts to gel. You're all of one accord," he said. "The one I've been in has been really organized, and people are polite and supportive."

Mosley said he's hoping that some other clients from Community Services will be willing to step forward and become certified for NAMI Connection groups. He has some others in mind, but for now, Drake and Coleman are off to a good start.

"I hope to be doing it for a while," Coleman said.

DR. LYDIA WEISSER NAMED DMH MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Mississippi State Hospital's Clinical Services Director Dr. Lydia Weisser recently assumed responsibility as Medical Director for the Mississippi Department of Mental Health (DMH).

Dr. Weisser has spent her professional career working with individuals who have a mental illness. She has served as the chief psychiatrist and administrator of psychiatric and medical care for Mississippi State Hospital since 2007, and will continue to serve in those capacities in addition to her new role in the Department of Mental Health.

"It is evident that Dr. Weisser's knowledge and contributions have significantly improved the delivery of mental health services at Mississippi State Hospital and I know she will do the same for the entire agency," DMH Executive Director Ed LeGrand said.

"She is an effective leader who embraces new ideas. She has been a strong advocate of our agency's strategic plan and is helping us support a brighter future for mental health services in Mississippi by mapping a course for a better tomorrow."

Dr. Weisser is certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, for whom she has also served as a board examiner. She has additional certification in Psychiatric Administration and Management. She is a Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, a member of the American Association of Psychiatric Administrators, and a delegate to the APA Committee on Psychiatric Administra-

tion and Management.

Before her career with DMH, Dr. Weisser served as Clinical Director for East Central Regional Hospital in Augusta, Ga. and Clinical Director for West Central Georgia Regional Hospital in Columbus, Ga. She obtained her medical degree from West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine, where she was an honor graduate, Board of Regent's scholar, and member of Psi Sigma Alpha honor society.



Dr. Weisser completed her residency in psychiatry at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) where she served as Chief Resident. During her tenure at UAB, Dr. Weisser was recipient of the Upjohn Achievement Award and Pfizer Award for Psychiatry Resident of the Year.

She began her employment as Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the Medical College of Georgia in 1997, where she was twice named Department of Psychiatry and Health Behavior Clinical Supervisor of the Year and also received the Educational Excellence Award. She completed the Georgia Department of Human Resources Leadership Development Institute in 2003 and also received her Master's Degree in Business Administration from Troy State University in 2004.

She is also a graduate of the Mississippi Certified Public Manager Program, Stennis Institute of Government and the DMH Focus Program.

FOUR MSH EMPLOYEES GRADUATE FROM DMH FOCUS GROUP

Four Mississippi State Hospital employees recently graduated from the Department of Mental Health's (DMH) "Focus" program, an accelerated leadership development initiative.

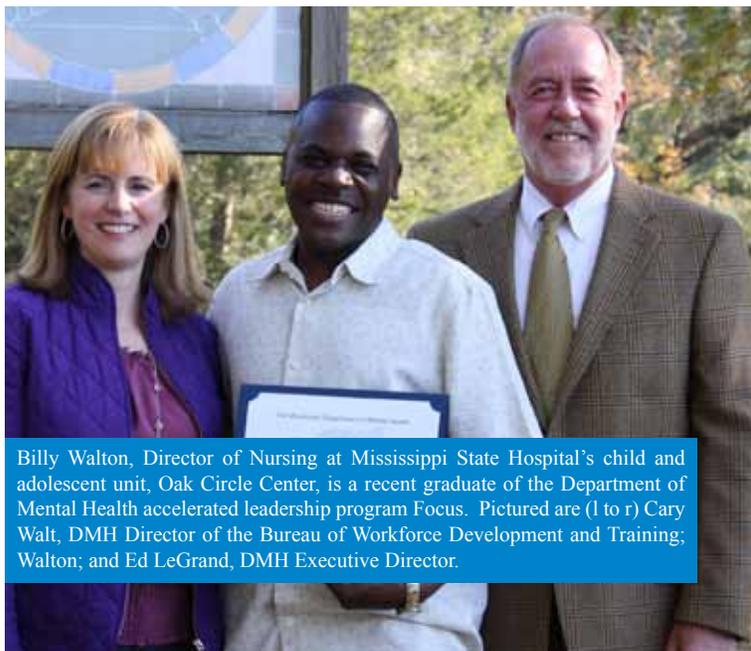
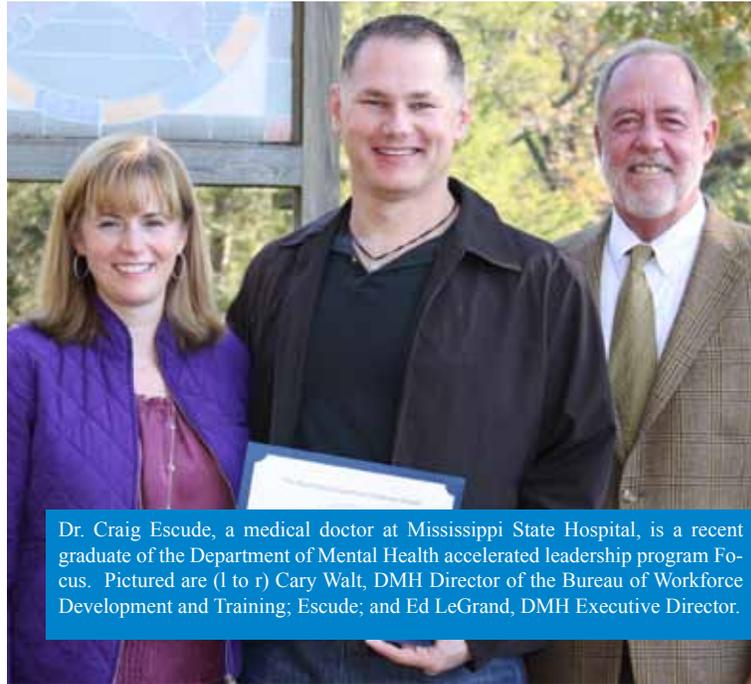
Dr. Lydia Weisser, Dr. Joseph Griebler, Dr. Craig Escude and Billy Walton all graduated during a ceremony held on Friday, Nov. 12 at Duncan Gray Center in Canton. Focus offers a unique opportunity for employees to hone their skills to greater and higher personal performance and self-awareness.

"Focus is one of the most exciting projects our agency has been involved with," said Ed LeGrand, DMH Executive Director. "This groundbreaking initiative is helping to strengthen our employees and build upon their talents. DMH's mission is to support a better tomorrow

today and this is one of our efforts to prepare the leaders of tomorrow."

Weisser is the Clinical Services Director at the hospital, Griebler is Director of the Male Receiving and Chemical Dependence Unit, Escude is a medical doctor at Mississippi State Hospital and Hudspeth Regional Center and Walton is Director of Nursing at the child and adolescent unit, Oak Circle Center. Weisser and Griebler are Rankin County residents while Walton and Escude are residents of Hinds County.

The Focus program lasts 12-18 months and involves four multi-day retreats as well as community service projects. The goal is to help DMH employees reach maximum capacity and to develop "bench strength" for the agency. This experience challenges participants to grow to new heights in both ability and attitude.



STIGMA IS ON THE MOVE WITH NAMIWALKS 2010



The MSH Community Services team at the Central Mississippi NAMI Walks for the Mind of America event at Mayes Lake on Saturday, Nov. 6.



Just one of the several t-shirt designs that some participants designed themselves and wore at the Central Mississippi walk.

Mississippi State Hospital employees, patients and volunteers gathered over the weekend to show their support for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and its mission to bring about community awareness and education of mental health issues.

On Saturday, Nov. 6, they joined hundreds of others from across the state at Mayes Lake in Jackson for NAMI Walks for the Mind of America, a fundraising walk designed to raise money for programs for those affected by serious mental illness and also to raise awareness and erase the stigma associated with mental illness. The day before, a group of around 100 gathered at the hospital campus for their own walk, simply to show their support of NAMI and its activism efforts.

“Friends of Mississippi State Hospital and NAMI Mississippi are joining hands this morning so we can support all of the advocacy programs, education programs and support programs that NAMI provides to people in Mississippi who live with mental illnesses, and also to their families,” MSH Director James Chastain said at the Friday morning walk.

“This is a very important mission that NAMI has, and we’re going to join hands, raise funds, raise awareness, and we’re going to do it all over again tomorrow.”

Saturday’s walk was a success, with groups coming from Southaven, Tunica, Yazoo City, Meridian, Jackson and Gulfport to participate in the event at Mayes Lake.

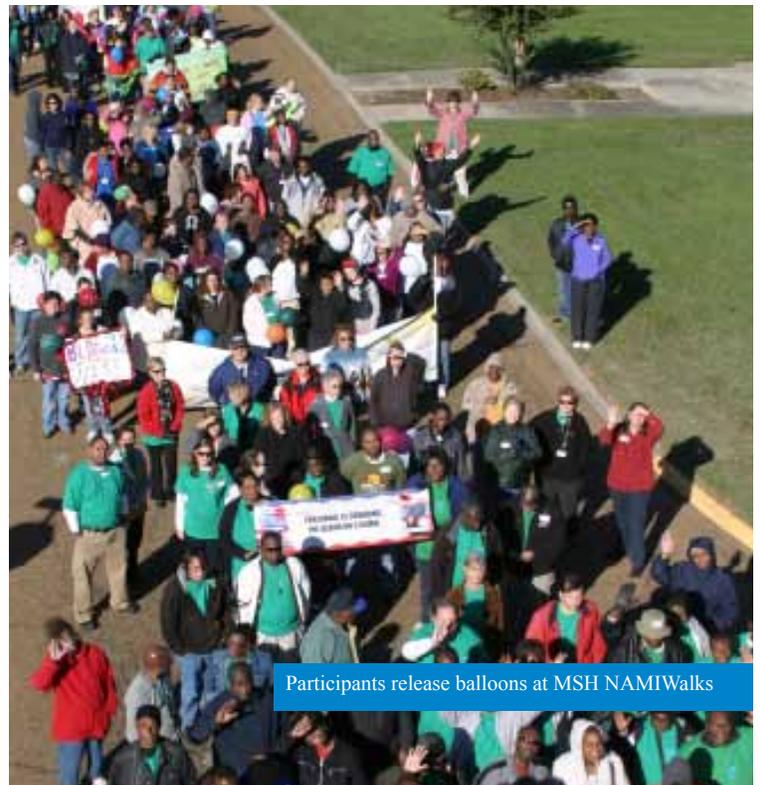
“Starting off with the partnership between MSH and NAMI, the walk that was held on Friday was a huge success to get the momentum started,” NAMI Mississippi Executive Director Tonya Tate said. “The attendance that we had for the walk on Saturday was outstanding. Being a statewide organization, we definitely had our share of attendance from across the state.”

Those at Mayes Lake also participated in festival-like activities like a cake walk, and the children enjoyed the space jump and visiting with the several therapy dogs who were there. After the actual walk itself ended, everyone had a chance to hear Serve Chilled, a band of local teens who played favorites from throughout the decades.

After several rounds of door prizes were given out, the 2010 NAMI Walks for the Mind of America came to a close as several individuals shared their own personal stories of living with mental illnesses, and the hope and recovery they have been able to experience despite their diagnoses.

“It was a fun, eventful day,” walk organizer La Vonne Whitehead said.

“There was a lot of team spirit in the air and the gathering of friends and family was phenomenal for me. I am glad that I got to experience the walk with NAMI and Mississippi State Hospital this year and am looking forward to both of them next year.”



Participants release balloons at MSH NAMI Walks

AMY WHITTEN TO SPEAK AT 2010 MSH EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR PROGRAM



Mississippi State Hospital is pleased to announce that Amy Whitten will be the guest speaker at the 2010 Employee of the Year program, to be held in the Dr. Albert Randel Hendrix Treatment Center on February 4, 2011.

Amy Whitten is an attorney, law professor and management consultant with more than 25 years' experience. She has extensive experience in leadership and executive management, having spent time as an active trial attorney and as court administrator for the Mississippi Supreme Court. She is a permanent faculty member of the Mississippi

Certified Public Managers Program and is the author of *The Mississippi Guide to Government* (2004), a manual used to orient public sector leaders. She is well-known in the Department of Mental Health for leading the inaugural Focus programs, the department's leadership development initiative.

An annual program at Mississippi State Hospital, the Employee of the Year event not only announces the selection of three employees who will receive the top honors at the hospital, but it recognizes all of the Employees of the Month who have been honored throughout the year. Each month, the Employee Recognition Committee selects three employees per month from the three hospital divisions (Licensed Clinical, Direct Care and Support Services). At the end of the year, the committee votes for one Employee of the Year in each category.

2010 EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR NOMINEES



Freddie Alexander
Direct Care



Tiffany Anderson
Licensed Clinical



Ginnie Arinder
Licensed Clinical



Lakeita Berry
Direct Care



Janice Brown
Support Services



Carol Burks
Direct Care



Clara Burrell
Direct Care



Jason Carr
Direct Care



Shelley Carr
Support Services



Denesha Evans
Support Services



Takesha Evans
Direct Care



Rachel Everett
Licensed Clinical



Essie Frazier
Jaquith Nursing Home



Steven Fuller
Support Services



Rachel King
Licensed Clinical



Tammy Kopesky
Medical Records



Candice Larkin
Support Services



Wilma Lee
Direct Care



Doris Macsherry
Licensed Clinical



Patricia Mayers
Support Services



Bernice McKenny
Licensed Clinical



Bobbie McKenzie
Support Services



Wonda McKie
Licensed Clinical



Marilyn Mount
Support Services



Margie Nations
Licensed Clinical



John Pace
Support Services



Elena Phillips
Licensed Clinical



Shirice Reed
Direct Care



Marie Robinson
Direct Care



Rose Scott
Support Services



Dornette Thompson
Licensed Clinical



Renee Todd
Licensed Clinical



Eddie Williams, Jr.
Direct Care



Arlisa Woodson
Direct Care



The celebration of the holiday season on the Mississippi State Hospital campus came to a close on Wednesday, Dec. 22 when dozens of staff, volunteers, local officials and other community leaders donned Santa Claus costumes and presented gift bags to every patient and resident at the hospital.

While Santa Day, as the annual tradition is known around the campus, may have helped close out the holiday season at the hospital, it was far from the only activity. The celebrations were marked all during the month, beginning with the annual Christmas parade on Dec. 3 and continuing with Christmas programs and parties thrown almost daily by volunteers.

The gift bags given to patients and residents on Santa Day are made possible through the generous donations of the volunteers who give their time during the holidays to help spread cheer and good tidings to those who were not fortunate enough to spend the holidays with family and friends. They often bring food and share home-cooked meals, and many others sing hymns or perform traditional Christmas carols while visiting.

“We have a lot of groups who come year after year, and their contributions mean more than we can say,” Volunteer Services Director Sheila Shows said. “They give of themselves to come here and visit, and you can see what a difference that makes in many of our patients. I think many of us may not realize what a difference a little bit of time and fellowship among friends can make until we go without it for a while.”

One of those groups that has been visiting for years is a group from the Washington County Mental Health Association. Around the hospital, the day they come is known as “Greenville Bus Day,” since for years they made the trek to Rankin County in a bus stuffed full with boxes of donations.

“It’s been a project of the different churches in the area for years,” said Jo Ann Lee, who has been coming on “Greenville Bus Day” since the 1980s. “There are about 50 churches who put boxes in their church and fill it up with gifts, and we’re the ones who collect them and pack them and bring them in.”

Others make monetary donations, said Helen Worsham, another volunteer who has been visiting for years. Her group from Washington County not only brings gifts, but also offers rides to those in the area who would like to come visit relatives receiving treatment at the hospital.

“That’s also been going on for a number of years,” she said. “It means a lot for people to get to visit their loved ones during the holidays.”

Another group, a brotherhood from Griffith Memorial Baptist Church, has been visiting every Christmas season for at least the past five years. They heard about the need at the hospital and decided they wanted to provide holiday meals for patients on the Forensics Unit.

“We asked for the group that needed somebody the most,” church member Rick Killingsworth said. “That group of men in there loves it,” he said, pointing to the other church members.

Besides the meal, they bring some fresh fruit, and his group usually has a short devotion for those who would like to participate, and they also lead them in some Christmas music.

“It’s just that time of year. They all know we need to be doing something for somebody, and it’s not about us,” Killingsworth said. “We just appreciate the opportunity.”









JNH

Jaquith Nursing Home

HAPPENINGS

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JAQUITH RESIDENTS MAKING A NEW FRIEND THROUGH PET THERAPY

Jaquith Nursing Home residents have been getting to know a new friend who's been spreading a lot of joy over the past several months.

Hershey, a two-year-old chocolate lab, has been visiting the nursing home as a therapy dog thanks to her owner, Mississippi State Hospital employee Melita Breeden. Hershey has been visiting JNH residents since she became certified through Therapy Dogs International earlier this year, letting them pet her, play with her, and sharing her unconditional affection with everyone she meets.

"It really brightens their day," Breeden said about bringing Hershey out for visits. "And it brightens your day too, because you see them enjoying it, and you know the dog is enjoying it too. It brings out a lot of reminiscing, and people remember really good times they spent with the pets they've had in their life."

In fact, pet therapy can do a lot more than just remind people of the animals they've loved over the years; it has been proven to combat loneliness, reduce anxiety, lower blood pressure, and give people something to look forward to.

Not only has Breeden seen those things happen with hers and Hershey's visits, but they're part of the reason she decided to get Hershey certified in the first place. She had seen other pet therapy dogs visit patients at Mississippi State Hospital and noticed the remarkable change it could bring about.

"You could just see those individuals who were withdrawn, and then when it was time for pet therapy, it's all big smiles and eyes wide open," she said. "Seeing it firsthand made me start thinking about it a little bit more."

It's safe to say that Melita is a dog person. Hershey was part of a litter of 11 puppies, and Melita and her husband decided to keep seven of them. Hershey happened to be one of the two chocolate labs in the litter. Melita had said she always wanted to have a female chocolate lab to train as a pet therapy dog, so she finally had a chance.

Hershey, for her part, seems to have the perfect demeanor for it. Laid back, friendly, and happy, she makes it easy for anyone to approach her.

First though, she had to get certified. With her natural disposition, it didn't turn out to be too difficult for Hershey. She passed the American Kennel Club Good Citizen Test, a pre-requisite for Therapy Dog International, and then basic obedience courses were no problem for her.

It's almost surprising, actually, since labs are sometimes known as be-



Melita and Hershey

ing hyper dogs. Hershey, though, has always stayed calm, no matter what the situation.

"Even when we first get started with visits, and people are all around her and excited to see her, she's still as calm as can be," Melita said.

On one recent visit, Melita and Hershey went to visit an old friend, Dora Sudbeck, a resident on Madison Inn. After greeting Dora, Hershey was happy to just lay down on the floor right at Dora's feet.

"I just love Melita to bring her out here and let me play with her some. She has a lot of fans out here," Dora said.

She's one of the residents who does a lot of reminiscing when Hershey visits. Another dog person, she used to have a lab that was part of her family for 19 years. She noted that Hershey is a particularly well-behaved lab, who always minds and is more than pleased to just let people rub on her and pet her.

"I think all the other ladies down here really love her too. When Melita is out on the porch and has her out there, they always come to see you, don't they darling?" she said, showing Hershey some love and petted her head.

She also said she's read about how pet therapy can lower blood pressure and have other benefits.

Melita said Ms. Sudbeck isn't the only resident who has been happy to see Hershey. Residents and staff alike couldn't help but come over and spend a few minutes petting her as they walked down the sidewalk on

one recent visit. Pet therapy, it turns out, doesn't just benefit patients and residents, but employees can enjoy the benefits when they see the changes in others around them.

Residents often ask when Melita will be bringing Hershey back out, usually asking for her by name, but there is one resident who refers to her as "my baby." Unfortunately, Hershey's visits have to be done on a strictly volunteer basis, which means she only gets to come out when Melita has a day off on a weekend or other holiday.

Still, Melita brings her to visit about once a month, and she's hoping to come out more frequently and have it become a more regular part of her schedule.

There are plenty of people who would probably appreciate it.

"I do miss it," Dora Sudbeck said. "I really am appreciative of Melita bringing Hershey up here. I'd really love to have another one. I'd love to have my room full of them."

For information about volunteering at Mississippi State Hospital and Jaquith Nursing Home, please call 601-351-8018. For more information about Therapy Dog International, please visit www.tdi-dog.org or email tdi@gti.net.



Hershey with Melita and Barbara, a new friend and JNH resident

THE REAL REASON FOR THE HOLIDAY BLUES

Many people have come to expect to feel a little less energetic, to want to sleep a little more, and to get a little down during the fall and winter seasons. The holiday blues, many people call this time, or maybe a winter depression.

Regardless of what it's commonly known by, this phenomenon has a very real cause and a very real name – Seasonal Affective Disorder. It can cause usually non-depressed individuals to experience depression symptoms and can cause mental health issues already present to become exacerbated.

"People complain about the symptoms, but they may not know the name for it and the biology of what's happening," said Dr. John Askew, Director of Psychological Services at Jaquith Nursing Home.

"It's related to the change in light levels, and the shortening of days as the seasons progress. Humanity has experienced this forever. It's a fairly old subject. It's an area of interest on the border between psychology and biology."

What happens, in a nutshell, is this: When the sun sets and light fades, the body releases the hormone melatonin, signaling that it's time to sleep. Less sunlight during the shorter winter days means melatonin is released earlier than many people are used to.

While the body may be signaling that it's ready to sleep, many people are still engrossed in their evening activities and putting off sleep. Their actual sleep cycle doesn't mesh with what the body is saying it needs, and it ends up causing the symptoms so many people recognize during the holiday season.

"What it will do is it may have some effect on their mood, and you'll find things like increased appetite," Askew said. "Everybody complains about gaining weight during the holidays, but it's not just the big holiday meals. If Christmas were at a different time of year, we'd still be packing on weight during winter."

It ends up affecting an estimated 6.1 percent of the U.S. population, while a full 14.3 percent experience a milder form known as Subsyndromal Seasonal Affective Disorder. Besides the effects on a person's mood, symptoms may include having trouble waking up, oversleeping, trouble concentrating, and a lack of energy.

"More exposure to natural sunlight helps, and so do more outdoor activities," Askew said.

That may be good for weekends, but for many who work during the week, the trouble is that they don't have a chance to do those things while the sun is still out. But it turns out there are ways that can help get around that time constraint and alleviate some of those SAD symptoms.

Light therapy using fluorescent lights that put out a brightness level of 10,000 lux and produce full-spectrum light can imitate the sun's rays and essentially trick the body into thinking the sun is out.

"It's not tanning you or anything like that, but you're exposing the photoreceptors in the eye to the particular brightness level and, very importantly, the color of light that matches natural sunlight," Askew said.

Someone could go as far as buying a light box specifically made for light therapy, or just go to Home Depot and buy the bulbs that will fit into their regular lamps and light fixtures. For the elderly, this can not only combat SAD, but have the added effect of improving visual perception that may have fallen over time.

Others may feel the symptoms more if they watch a lot of late night television or use their computers at night, both activities that have the person staring at a bright light. That fights off the

production of melatonin and can cause even more trouble falling asleep.

“The main thing to get across is that this is deeply-rooted in our biological make up. It affects everyone, even if it doesn’t have any negative effects,” Askew said.

“The symptoms will fade as the seasons change. A lot of people get really joyous in the switch back to daylight saving time.”

ANNUAL PUMPKIN CONTEST GETS JAQUITH RESIDENTS IN THE HALLOWEEN SPIRIT



Jaquith Nursing Home residents showed their Halloween spirit once again this year with the pumpkin decorating contest that has become a highlight of the fall season here.

Residents on all five inns that make up the nursing home showed their creativity on Wednesday, Oct. 27 by decorating not just their pumpkins, but having a whole theme they and JNH staff set up to impress the judges in one of four categories – most creative, most resident involvement, best presentation and best overall.

“I’m always impressed with the amount of involvement the residents put into these contests,” JNH Director Marc Lewis said. “Every year, residents put forth a great effort for what may seem like such a small thing to many of us. They clearly enjoy it, and we’re glad to see so many people enjoying themselves.”

Jaquith Inn won the award for most creative after judges found a table full of jack o’lanterns involved in a poker game. Jefferson Inn, Building 29, had the most resident involvement, with their pumpkin serving as the cowardly lion in the building’s “Wizard of Oz” theme. Building 33, also Jefferson Inn, received the best presentation award for their brightly-colored ladybug pumpkin. Finally, Adams Inn won the best overall award for the festive party they threw.

While not everyone was able to win an award, the judges were impressed by all of the work the residents put in on each and every building. Residents on Building 28 used their pumpkin to set up a scarecrow outside the door – but their scarecrow looked more like a hippie adorned with peace symbols and spiders. Building 34 skipped Halloween entirely and went straight to Thanksgiving, making a turkey out of their pumpkin. Somehow, Building 34’s pumpkin ended up looking like Donald Trump and sitting next to a pile of Monopoly cash. Building 41’s pumpkin wore a sombrero and sported a western theme.

Some of the residents went the spooky route. Building 48 had a pumpkin that ended up looking like someone who’d been squashed by a giant rock, with the pumpkin head on one side and some stuffed jeans poking out of the other. Building 78 decorated theirs into a giant black bat, complete with wings and fangs.

The pumpkins for this year’s event were donated by the North Delta Produce Growers Association, who reached out to Mississippi State Hospital and Jaquith Nursing Home through its work with Alcorn State University.

“Any time we can, we try to stay involved in the community,” said Charles Houston, president of the organization. “That’s where we want our business to be – grow local, and allow citizens to buy local. We do want to run a successful business, but we want to be good friends to the community, too.”

The association uses any excess crops from the fields to donate to churches and other non-profit organizations who could use the food. This is the second year in a row they have donated to Jaquith Nursing Home. While residents didn’t use them for pumpkin pies or any other cooking, the pumpkin carving contest has been an annual tradition that brings a lot of joy to the residents, who often surprise with their creativity and designs.

Elizabeth Myles, marketing specialist for Alcorn’s Mississippi Small Farm Development Center, said partnering with local organizations was good for everyone involved.

“I know all the residents enjoyed it last year, and it looked like so much fun,” Myles said. “It’s great to be involved and have

partnerships like this.”

Lewis said that while it is a lot of fun, it means more than that to many of the Jaquith residents.

“It’s fun for us, but it is things like this that help our residents feel more at home,” Lewis said.



SEPTEMBER FAMILY COUNCIL FOCUSES ON SHATTER THE SILENCE AND SILVER ALERT

Thirty nine friends and family members of Jaquith Nursing Home residents attended the September Family Council meeting to visit their loved ones and members of JNH administration, as well as hear about some new initiatives within the Department of Mental Health.

Before hearing from the main speaker, Social Work Supervisor Rena Rideout informed attendees about the latest activities that have taken place on and off the Mississippi State Hospital campus. From July through September, Jaquith residents had fun with events like the annual Independence Day celebration, concerts, cookouts, and the Serendipity art show. They were also getting ready for events like the Mississippi State Fair and the hospital’s Fall Festival.

Kathy Van Cleave, Director of the Division of Alzheimer’s Disease and Other Dementia, also spoke about two new undertakings DMH, the Shatter the Silence elderly suicide prevention campaign and the Silver Alert System now being used to notify the public when a loved one who is believed to have dementia or other cognitive impairments is missing.

She said that while many people only associate suicide with younger people, individuals 65 and older have the highest rate of suicide, and it often goes hand in hand with Alzheimer’s Disease or dementia. Many caregivers can also experience stress or depression, even after placing their loved ones in a care facility.

“We have the opportunity now to raise awareness and bring those conversations to the forefront,” she said. “We can recognize that it’s ok to admit you have a problem, no matter where you fall in

the age spectrum. Seeking help is not just for those in the 18-24 age group.”

She encouraged caregivers who may be experiencing stress or other problems to talk to someone, whether it’s a friend, pastor, or professional. She also shared many warning signs of suicide, such as increased prescription use, a sudden rush to complete a will, or a drastic change in eating or sleeping habits.

In addition, Van Cleave introduced the Silver Alert System, which is designed to spread the news when an elderly person who may have cognitive impairments has been reported missing.

“This is a collaborative effort between several agencies who will all worked together to draft legislation and enact the Silver Alert. Just like with Amber Alerts for children, there’s a whole network of media outlets that work together,” she said.

There are preventative measures caregivers can take, like making sure their loved one gets exercise to reduce anxiety and restlessness, and reassuring them if they feel lost or disoriented. It is important not to leave a person with dementia unsupervised in new surroundings, she said.

If the worst case scenario does happen, the Silver Alert System will prove to be a valuable tool.

“This gives us access to that media network and the inter-agency network that crosses jurisdiction between counties and municipalities, so that if a vulnerable adult is reported missing, we can all work together to find them,” Van Cleave said.