



# MISSISSIPPI STATE HOSPITAL

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## **For Immediate Release**

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## **FRIENDS OF MISSISSIPPI STATE HOSPITAL SHARES THANKS, STORIES OF LIFE CHANGE WITH LEGISLATORS**

WHITFIELD—About 200 people gathered at Galloway United Methodist Church on Tuesday, Nov. 7 to thank Mississippi legislators for their support of the Department of the Mental Health.

Forty-six legislators attended the annual Legislative Appreciation Breakfast, hosted by Friends of Mississippi State Hospital (MSH) and Friends of Hudspeth Center. The volunteer organizations are composed of employees, family members of those served, and community leaders who work to improve awareness of and raise funds for their respective facilities. With a large number of new legislators taking office for the first time, the breakfast, now in its 24<sup>th</sup> year, also gave those individuals a chance to share how they had been personally impacted by the services offered through the department.

MSH Director James G. Chastain thanked the legislators on behalf of two groups of people – the staff members who work at the Mississippi Department of Mental Health and the families who are in need of mental health, substance abuse and intellectual and developmental disability services.

“I can assure you that all of those individuals and their families are very appreciative of the support you give our services as members of the legislature,” Chastain said. “They appreciate it more than they’re able to say.

“I always tell people that we’re very fortunate as Mississippians to have a legislature that’s made of ladies and gentlemen who demonstrate through their legislation that they truly care about the quality of the health care services delivered in Mississippi.”

Chastain then introduced one of two guest speakers for the breakfast, Chris Marcell. President of the Gulf Coast affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Marcell spoke about how his life had changed after being diagnosed with mental illness.

“There was a time when I could not take care of myself or sort out sound directions in life,” Marcell said. “During the severe stages of mental illness that I have experienced, I could not have found the journey of recovery without family encouragement, spiritual faith, and state-funded medical residential treatment.”

Marcell said he at first resisted treatment, not understanding he was sick. But he also said he ended up greatly benefiting from the inpatient and residential treatment he eventually received.

“Having a bed available when I needed it most was crucial,” he said. “In this case, God has done for me what I could not do myself. I have a correct diagnosis and effective medication through the state system.”

He is working on returning to the life he once had, and said he not only has hopes for his career now, but an additional role as a volunteer and advocate that he called challenging and fulfilling.

The next guest speaker was Wes Miller, whose son Micah has been served through Hudspeth Regional Center for many years. He painted for the legislators and other guests a picture of his son, now a young man, and how his family began noticing developmental delays when he was just a toddler. Many doctors told the Millers many different things, including that Micah would never be able to socialize.

He eventually began to receive services through Hudspeth Regional Center, the intermediate care facility for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities that is located near Pearl in Rankin County.

“Without the assistance we got, we wouldn’t have had a son who got a job at age 16, or who became an Eagle Scout at age 17,” Wes Miller said.

Micah has gone on to earn an occupational diploma from Jackson Public Schools, buy his own car, graduate from Hinds Community College, become a blue belt in karate, study photography and become a homeowner, among other accomplishments.

“We wanted to make sure Micah has the best life he can possibly have,” Wes Miller said. “That couldn’t have happened without Hudspeth Center and the Department of Mental Health.”

Micah shared a few sentiments himself before the event was over.

“My life might have been very different if I had not received assistance from organizations like the Department of Mental Health,” Micah said. “I thank God every day and don’t take my blessings for granted.

“Today is a great day.”

*MSH, a facility of the Mississippi Department of Mental Health, was founded in 1855 and 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. The hospital is accredited by the Joint Commission.*

- 30 -

**PHOTOS ATTACHED: Friends Legislative Breakfast 1 – Guest Speaker Chris Marcell, President of the Gulf Coast Affiliation of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (center) and his wife Jena (left) visit with attendees at the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Friends Legislative Appreciation Breakfast in Jackson on Tuesday, Feb. 7.**

**Friends Legislative Breakfast 2 – Representatives Esther Harrison, Sherra Hillman Lane and Steve Massengill make their way through the breakfast line at Galloway United Methodist Church on Tuesday, Feb. 7 during an appreciation breakfast hosted by Friends of Mississippi State Hospital and Friends of Hudspeth Center. The two**



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**facilities, both part of the Department of Mental Health, hold the annual event to thank the Mississippi Legislature for its support of the department and those served through it.**