



MISSISSIPPI STATE HOSPITAL

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FRIENDS OF MISSISSIPPI STATE HOSPITAL CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

WHITFIELD—Nearly 100 members of Friends of Mississippi State Hospital gathered on Wednesday, August 22 for a momentous occasion – the 25th anniversary of the volunteer organization that does so much for the hospital, its employees, and most importantly, its patients.

During the meeting, members voted in a new board of directors and approved a slate of projects for the organization's upcoming year, including employee recognition, volunteer appreciation, and patient events like the annual fireworks celebration and the Harry O'Steen Golf Tournament for patients.

It also gave those present a chance to look back on the history of Friends of MSH and recognize some of those volunteers and employees who were instrumental in getting the group its start back in 1987. In particular, Mr. Jerald Ball, former Volunteer Services Director at Mississippi State Hospital, was honored for his achievements in helping the hospital's volunteer program become what it is today.

"Even though Mr. Ball retired in 2005, he has built a volunteer services program that can transition into the future and continue to reap dividends for our patients, residents and our hospital," Mississippi State Hospital Director James G. Chastain said.

"He continues to be an avid supporter and volunteer at MSH. Mr. Jerald Ball exemplifies the spirit of volunteer service, and has spent his professional and personal life promoting and nurturing that spirit in others."

Though the Friends charter was signed in 1987, Mr. Chastain said the foundation for the group was laid in 1984, when Mr. Ball became Director of Volunteer Services. At the time, the hospital had a core group of loyal volunteers and employees who made donations and provided activities, but there was no real volunteer organization or outreach.

Mr. Ball immediately developed a plan to recruit and retain volunteers. He focused on making sure patients had adequate clothing and that they were not forgotten during the Christmas holiday season. The Clothing Donation Center at the hospital was established, and Mr. Ball promoted it through presentations to area churches and civic organizations.

He also established the Christmas House and Santa Day, traditions that still continue, by once again presenting the needs of the MSH patients to churches and volunteer groups, and sending personal letters that described how others could get personally involved in helping meet those needs.

Mr. Ball's initiatives that were just fledgling programs back then are full-blown successes today. In 2011, the Clothing Donation Center recorded 324 donations from individuals and groups valued at more than \$96,000. During the year, more than 4,500 clothing items were distributed to MSH patients and residents. Also in 2011, more than 3,000 volunteers provided a record 232 activities and parties for patients and residents. Of those, 115 were provided during the holiday season by more than 2,043 volunteers. A total of 15,168 volunteer hours were logged for the year, valued at more than \$315,000.

"I have such fond memories of Mississippi State Hospital and the staff here, the Friends organization, all the presidents of Friends who put up with me to do so many of the good things that have happened over the years," Mr. Ball said.

"I could sit here and call people by name and just say thank you, thank you, thank you for all you've done, but I'll just say thank you to everyone, and keep up the good work."

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.

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PHOTO ATTACHED: At the 2012 Friends of MSH Annual Meeting, members voted in the board of directors for the upcoming year. Pictured are (front row, l to r) Vice President Bridget Lowery, Marilyn Garth, Miriam Hollens, Secretary Sheila Shows, Jerald Ball, Tim Durr, (back row, l to r) Kathy Denton, Marc Lewis, Treasurer Bill Payne, Bobby Stephens, Steve Lesley, and MSH Director James G. Chastain. Mr. Ball was also recognized during the meeting for his contributions to Mississippi State Hospital's Volunteer Services Program.