



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR

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**HAWAII STATE HOSPITAL HONORS PATIENTS WITH 14th ANNUAL
REMEMBRANCE SERVICE**

KANEEOHE – The Hawaii State Hospital, which has provided quality psychiatric care to Hawaii residents since 1930, will honor its patients, past and present, at the hospital's 14th annual Remembrance Service at Hawaiian Memorial Park Cemetery on Wednesday, Oct. 8, from 12:45 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. Stephen Prusinski, Chaplain in the Spiritual Care Services at the Hawaii State Hospital, will lead the ceremony.

“This special ceremony is a vivid reminder that we must continually advocate for those with mental illnesses who seek healing at our hospital or reintegration into the community,” said William May, Hawaii State Hospital administrator. “It is both our honor and duty to treat everyone who comes through our door with the utmost respect and attention.”

May's remarks are particularly poignant against the historical backdrop of patient care in the past. In 1930, the Oahu Asylum closed and more than 500 patients were moved to the new Territorial Hospital in Kaneohe. Yet, for nearly 30 years, state laws prohibited many from being treated with respect even after they had died.

A state law prohibited using taxpayer funds to bury indigent patients who died while residing at the Territorial Hospital. If unclaimed by family members, their remains were cremated at the hospital and the ashes stored in the basement of the hospital's administration building. Over time, the containers used to store their ashes deteriorated, and the ashes from broken containers eventually spilled onto the concrete floor and many of the affixed labels fell away or became faded or illegible.

“Our sensibilities today make it difficult to believe that such laws even existed in Hawaii,” May said. “As an organization, the Hawaii State Hospital is committed to making sure that all those entrusted to our care and all those who serve the patients are treated with utmost respect.”

Public pressure on the First State Legislature in 1960 resulted in funds being appropriated to properly bury the 667 at the then-new Hawaiian Memorial Park cemetery in Kaneohe. The ashes were placed in urns and respectfully buried in four concrete vaults at a sloping lawn at an edge of the cemetery. Two bronze plaques memorialize the names of a 540 known individuals. In addition, 127 “unknowns,” whose identification labels had become unreadable, were laid to rest as well.

The Remembrance Service is open to anyone living at the hospital and in the community with mental illness, hospital staff, former patients and staff, and community members.

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