



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Hawai'i State Hospital to honor past and present patients during the 19th annual Remembrance Service

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i State Hospital, which has provided quality psychiatric care to Hawai'i residents since opening its doors in 1930, will honor its past and present patients during the 19th annual Remembrance Service on Sept. 18 from 9:30 to 10:15 a.m. at the Hawaiian Memorial Park Cemetery in Kaneohe. Pacific Health Ministry will lead the ceremony, which is open to the public.

“This special ceremony represents the progress made in changing attitudes and reducing the stigma around those who experience mental illness,” said Run Heidelberg, administrator of the Hawai'i State Hospital. “It also serves as a reminder of the hospital's mission of healing and recovery for every patient with the goal of reintegration into the community. We are committed to providing the highest quality of care in a respectful and safe environment for our patients and those who serve them each day.”

The ceremony is held each year to remember patients from years past who were not treated with respect in both life and death. When the Oahu Asylum closed in 1930, more than 500 patients were moved to the new Territorial Hospital, now Hawai'i State Hospital, in Kaneohe. For nearly 30 years after that, the hospital was unable to use taxpayer funds to properly bury indigent patients who died while residing at the Territorial Hospital.

Prior to 1960, if unclaimed by family members, patient 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.

Public pressure on the First State Legislature in 1960 resulted in funds being appropriated to properly bury the remains of 668 former patients at the then-new Hawaiian Memorial Park cemetery in Kaneohe.

On July 1, 1960, ashes of the former patients 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 541 known individuals. In addition, 127 “unknowns,” whose identification labels had become unreadable, were laid to rest as well. In 2000, the hospital established a special remembrance ceremony for these individuals.

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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