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Apalachee Center Opens New, Expanded Psych Hospital

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Residents of the Big Bend region will be able to easily access state-of-the-art behavioral healthcare thanks to the opening of the newly renovated and expanded Eastside Psychiatric Hospital (EPH). To address the growing behavioral healthcare needs of eight Big Bend counties, Apalachee Center, Inc., today opened the doors of its newly-constructed inpatient hospital, which features **the region's first and only Geropsychiatric Unit**, a self-contained facility dedicated to accommodating older patients and their psychiatric needs.

Located in EPH, the Geropsychiatric Unit is the first and only one of its kind in the region, and one of just a handful of dedicated acute geropsychiatric units nationwide. Specially designed in collaboration with the Agency for Health Care Administration, the unit addresses the unique issues of persons aged 55 and older who are suffering from acute psychiatric disturbance. Distinctive features include readily-available nurse call buttons, secluded visiting rooms, specially chosen fabric and color schemes, and increased capacity for medical care.

Local dignitaries — including U.S. Rep. Allen Boyd and Secretary George H. Sheldon of the Department of Children and Families — spoke to a crowd of healthcare providers and business and political leaders about the importance of innovative and comprehensive mental healthcare in the Big Bend.

"The expansion of Apalachee is an exciting development in our community," said DCF Secretary George Sheldon, "It's a significant step forward that will ensure that the people who need help the most will receive state-of-the art care in a timely manner."

The 12-bed Geropsychiatric Unit was designed in consultation with leading national geropsychiatric experts as well as local organizations and caregivers dedicated to serving the geriatric population. The Geropsychiatric Unit features a specially-trained multidisciplinary service and medical team, including the former director of the Gerontology Department at Florida State Hospital.

"Apalachee Center is very proud to be taking this step forward in providing state-of-the-art behavioral health services to the most vulnerable members of our community. The newly renovated and expanded units will provide a meticulously-designed physical environment as well as evidence-based psychiatric and psychotherapeutic care based on the most recent research available," said Dr. Jay Reeve, president and CEO of Apalachee Center. "The new Eastside Psychiatric Hospital will allow Apalachee to continue to improve our provision of easily-accessible and effective treatment for individuals and their families across the age span."

The Geropsychiatric Unit and updated EPH are additions to a long list of specialized Apalachee Center services, which include peer recovery services, Assertive Community Treatment (FACT), the Homeless Project, the award-winning FIT and IFIT Programs in partnership with DCF, and the nationally recognized Bond-Apalachee Wellness Integration Center in partnership with Bond Community Health Center, Inc.

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Apalachee Center, Inc., is a not-for-profit community mental health center with offices in Franklin, Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Taylor and Wakulla counties. Established in 1948, Apalachee Center provides emotional, psychiatric and substance abuse care to Big Bend residents in crisis or in recovery. For more information about Apalachee Center and the services available, visit www.apalacheecenter.org.