

February 18, 2009

### Superintendent's Message: New Year Message

As we move forward into a new year, I want to take this opportunity to bring everyone up to speed, onto the same page, and into the fold on what is happening here at Oregon State Hospital.

We have reached a milestone in the construction of our new hospital. As you know, the work on the transitional cottages is just about complete and patients begin moving in the week of February 23. The cottages are beautiful and welcoming. They set the stage for the direction we want to go with the care and treatment of Oregonians with mental illness. Because the beds in the six transition cottages are 36 of the 620 total in the replacement hospital they are under OSH oversight. This marks the beginning of the handoff of the "keys" from the OSH Replacement Project to the hospital.

Construction work continues on the temporary treatment malls on our north side. In a few months, our staff will begin working in the malls and getting a first-hand look at what the new facility will be like. As a huge supporter and proponent of the treatment mall concept, I cannot emphasize enough how critical it is for staff to be trained, familiar and comfortable in this environment before the new hospital opens. The treatment malls are not just a part or an addition to the work we do. They are the centerpiece of the patient-first, patient driven centralized model we have adopted for the new hospital. This is an investment - an investment that greatly improves the care and treatment of Oregonians and assures a greater chance at their successful long term recovery. I want to thank all of you for your enthusiasm and support of this initiative.

Consequently, new construction raises some issues around safety. For the time being, the OSH Salem campus is an active construction zone. What this means is there are parts of the campus that are not accessible because they are unsafe. The sites where the cottages are being remodeled, for example, are hard hat only areas. If you have a need to be in any of these areas in order to do your job, please contact the deputy administrator of the replacement project. Jodie Jones can be contacted on GroupWise or at 503-945-9425.

Equally important are the measures we are taking to assure the safety of patients and staff on the wards. OSH is opening an intensive treatment ward for women that will provide a highly structured environment. OSH is remodeling part of the men's maximum security ward on 48B to house five female patients.

Dr. Sara Walker, a member of the planning team, said the concept for this unit will be applied to areas of the new hospital. For example, the plan for the new facility is to mix populations by clinical need, not legal status. This new women's unit meets that criteria and is being referred to as a Behavior Management Unit, which is the designation for 60 beds in the new facility.

"Those of us at OSH responsible for the care of women admitted here are excited about the development of the new unit," said Walker. "It is designed to meet the treatment needs of those women who require a highly structured environment to maintain safety, regardless of legal status. Treating those women on a separate unit will also allow us to create safer environments on the coed units, which will further our ability to care for women who do not require that level of structure. We are also very hopeful that this will result in improved safety for staff on coed units throughout the hospital."

Lastly, I wanted to say what an honor it has been to work with so many dedicated and talented people here at OSH. My first year as your superintendent has been a humbling and rewarding experience. I look forward to serving with you in the years ahead as we work to improve the lives of Oregonians