

News release

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Media contact: Rebeka Gipson-King, Oregon State Hospital, 503-756-0366; Robin Maxey, Sen. Peter Courtney's Office, 503-986-1605

Technical contact: Joni DeTrant, Oregon State Hospital medical record services, 503-945-2976

Oregon State Hospital hopes to unite families with cremated remains of past patients

While Oregon State Hospital has made enormous strides toward improving the care and treatment for the patients of today, there is unfinished work in honoring patients of previous generations.

Oregon State Hospital is the custodian of the cremated remains of approximately 3,500 people who died while living at Oregon State Hospital, Oregon State Tuberculosis Hospital, Mid-Columbia Hospital, Dammasch State Hospital, Oregon State Penitentiary, and Fairview Training Center between 1914 and the 1970s. These cremains were never claimed.

The hospital hopes to change that and unite the cremains with family members. To that end, the hospital has posted online the list of names of the people whose cremains are in its possession. Hospital officials urge anyone who thinks he or she may have a family member who passed away at one of these institutions to review the list. As soon as the connection can be confirmed, the hospital will make arrangements for the cremains to be sent to the family.

(more)

“It was the discovery of the Room of Forgotten Souls in 2004 that served as the catalyst for the construction of a new Oregon State Hospital and a new devotion to improving the mental health care system in our state,” said Senate President Peter Courtney (D-Salem/Gervais/Woodburn). “We owe it to these former patients to make every effort to reunite their cremains with their families.”

Courtney authored the law that allows Oregon State Hospital to make public the names and dates of birth of those former patients whose cremated remains are in its possession. This information otherwise would be protected by medical confidentiality laws.

The list of names for the deceased is posted on the Oregon State Hospital [website](#).

Names are listed alphabetically, and listings include the date of birth and the date of death, when known. Families who identify relatives on this list should contact the hospital’s Medical Records Services at 503-945-2976. You can also reach Medical Records Services by e-mail at osh.cremains@state.or.us or postal mail: OSH Medical Record Services, 2600 Center St. NE, Salem, OR, 97301.

Additionally, Oregon State Hospital is planning a memorial to honor those patients whose remains were unclaimed for decades and those that may never be claimed. This project, a collaboration with the Oregon Arts Commission, is funded through the Percent for Art in Public Places Program in the new hospital’s construction budget. It is expected to be complete in 2012.

“We hope all remains will be united with family, but we also know that may not be possible given how much time has passed,” said Superintendent Greg Roberts. “Those remains that stay at the hospital will be given a final resting place with all due dignity and respect.”

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