

**OFFICE OF THE COMMUNICATIONS**

1600 Ninth Street, Room 151  
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**PRESS RELEASE**

February 16, 2016  
For Immediate Release

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**STATE HOSPITAL CELEBRATES CENTENNIAL  
WITH THE OPENING OF A MUSEUM**

NORWALK – Marking a 100-year history of treating mental illness through psychiatry and care, Metropolitan State Hospital in Norwalk launched a centennial celebration today with the unveiling of a hospital museum.

“Since the hospital opened a century ago, the treatment of people who are mentally ill has advanced and changed in many amazing ways,” said Pam Ahlin, director of the Department of State Hospitals. “This museum will offer a small window into the past through which people can see not only how far we have come in our care of those with mental illness, but also in our understanding of these illnesses.”

It was 1913 when California Governor Hiram Johnson signed legislation to open what would first be called Norwalk State Hospital, a facility designed to provide care and treatment to California’s increasing population of individuals with substance addictions and psychiatric disabilities. Norwalk was selected over the choices of Beverly Hills and Signal Hill due to convenient roads and railroad access. The hospital accepted its first patients on February 15, 1916. As was common for the time, the state hospital was completely self-sufficient with its own farm, dairy, and livestock to provide for the needs of staff and patients.

“Metropolitan has been serving the people of the State of California for 100 years and is an essential and growing part of the community,” said Dr. Michael W. Barsom, executive director of Metropolitan State Hospital. “Much has changed in 100 years and there is much more change and innovation to come in the near future.”

Barsom also thanked the volunteer efforts of hospital staff and the assistance of local university students with making the museum possible. Because the museum is being operated by staff volunteers, it will only be open to the public at limited times and by appointment. Those interested in signing up for a visit can do so by contacting Bin Plume at (562) 651-5461 or sending an email to [MSHCentennial@dsh.ca.gov](mailto:MSHCentennial@dsh.ca.gov).

The state hospital, which is operated by more than 1,450 employees who serve about 750 patients, is the second in California to open a museum. The first was the Patton State Hospital Museum, which opened in April of 2015 and has since had more than 1,000 visitors.

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**Media Alert**

Release Date: February 8, 2016      Contact: Ken August  
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**METROPOLITAN STATE HOSPITAL CELEBRATES ITS CENTENNIAL  
Reflecting on the Past to Present: Asylum to Recovery**

**WHAT:** California Department of State Hospitals-Metropolitan, also known as Metropolitan State Hospital, kicked off its Centennial Celebration on February 16, 2016, reflecting on the history of the facility.

The event will include the opening of a small hospital museum, located inside of a historic building that once served as a home for hospital administrators. The museum will offer the public insight into how the treatment of mental illness has changed and improved during the last 100 years.

Members of media will be provided a special preview of the museum as well as a tour of the hospital's campus grounds.

**WHEN:**      **Tuesday, February 16, 2016. Event starts at 10 a.m. with a media tour beginning at 10:30 a.m.**

**WHERE:**      **Department of State Hospitals-Metropolitan, 11401 South Bloomfield Ave., Norwalk, CA.**

**WHO:**      Speakers at the event include:  
Mayor Leonard Shryock of Norwalk  
Dr. Michael Barsom, executive director of DSH-Metropolitan  
Rebecca McClary, hospital employee and centennial committee volunteer

**WHY:**      The hospital admitted its first patients on February 15, 1916, treating a population for substance addictions and mental illnesses. The museum is the second to be launched at a state hospital in California. The first museum opened at DSH-Patton in April 2015.

**VISUALS:**      Activities include:

- Singers and dancers
- Tour of museum containing artifacts and documents from the 100-year history of the facility.
- Formal ribbon cutting at 1 p.m. with public tours starting at 1:30 p.m.