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VOA groundbreaking set for Thursday

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The official groundbreaking for Tiffin Rehabilitation Center and Sojourn at Seneca is slated for 5 p.m. Thursday on the Mercy Tiffin Hospital campus. The project is to be funded by Volunteers of America, which operates Autumnwood Care Center in Tiffin. Site preparation began in early August. Sally St. Clair, executive director at Autumnwood, said invitations have been sent and the ceremony will be open to the public.

"The Volunteers of America representatives thought it would be very appropriate to have the groundbreaking ceremony after some of that dirt was cleared," she said.

The general contractor, Thomas and Marker, is to be represented at the ceremony, along with hospital officials.

Article Photos



IMAGE SUBMITTED

This artist rendering provided by Volunteers of America shows plans for Tiffin Rehabilitation Center and Sojourn at Seneca on the Mercy Tiffin Hospital campus.

The facility is to house a transitional care center with a rehabilitation department and a geriatric psychiatric care unit. St. Clair said the home office has not given her the estimated cost of the project.

"Financing for the construction of the project has been confirmed, but there's always the need for additional money to be raised to make the operations even better than what we anticipated," St.

Clair said. "All our programs nationally are supported heavily by donors, in-kind donations and volunteers that help to further the mission in all of our 400 communities in the United States."

Once the new building is completed, the hospital no longer will offer transitional care in-house. A press release from Mercy Tiffin stated the hospital's swing beds were intended to be "an interim solution" for transitional care until an "appropriate campus partner" was able to develop a transitional care service on the campus. Patients have a choice of locations at which to receive transitional care.

According to a news release, the swing bed unit provides care to patients needing either acute care medical/surgical nursing services or sub-acute (post-acute care) skilled nursing services. The opening of VOA's Transitional Care Unit will ensure that sub-acute skilled nursing services continue to be provided on the Mercy Tiffin campus for patients selecting this facility, while allowing the existing Mercy beds to be used for acute care medical/surgical nursing services.

St. Clair said her licensing allows her to oversee Autumnwood and the Tiffin Rehabilitation Center. She said some of the support staff will be shared between the two buildings for the "best economy of skill," but direct care staff, such as hands-on nursing and dietary, will be dedicated to the Tiffin Rehabilitation Center. Some new jobs are to be created, and some movement of specialized short-term rehabilitation staff is expected, St. Clair said.

"I definitely like to be present physically and to be accessible to all of our customers. It's only four miles from our building. I feel comfortable with that," St. Clair said. "I will be involved in the oversight of the daily operations at both. I'm one of those 'support services' that are going to be shared."

Because Sojourn at Seneca is to provide a new service for VOA, specialized staff is to be brought in for behavioral services, creating many new jobs. Volunteers of America employs its own personnel for physical and occupational therapy, but Autumnwood contracts with Optima for speech therapy. St. Clair said details for service providers for the facility probably will not be finalized until it is closer to completion.

VOA planned a spacious layout for the rehabilitation suite with all private accommodations for patients. St. Clair said that feature promotes the best environment for healing. Having been associated with Volunteers of America for 16 years, St. Clair said the plans for the behavioral health services have been in progress for several years, but in the meantime, many changes have come into play.

"I think we're better prepared now than had we opened when the replacement hospital opened in 2008. There are some benefits to the delays and other barriers we've come across ... We try to make the best of the changes. 'Helping America's most vulnerable' is the overall mission of Volunteers of America.

"These are definitely two very vulnerable populations we're planning to serve with Sojourn at Seneca and Tiffin Rehabilitation Center," St. Clair said.

Lynn Detterman, president and CEO at Mercy Tiffin and Mercy Willard, said Mercy values the partnership and the benefits of the new geriatric psychiatric service coming to the Mercy campus.

"Volunteers of America's new facility is an additional example of new services and partnerships envisioned in the development of the Mercy Tiffin Hospital campus ... While the VOA facility is on the

Mercy Tiffin campus, there other similar transitional care service providers in the Tiffin area that patients will be able to continue to select as their service provider," she said in a news release.

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