

Central State Hospital Redevelopment Authority

By Catherine Dean

After five years of developing a roadmap to revitalize the campus of Central State Hospital (CSH), many proposed programs are now becoming reality. The Central State Hospital Redevelopment Authority (CSHRA) was created in 2012, by state legislation, and tasked with redeveloping the history campus with a focus on job creation and education.

“We are witnessing plans coming to fruition,” said Mike Couch, executive director for CSHRA.

The first class of the National Guard Youth Challenge Academy (NGYCA), which occupies the CSH Boland Building, graduated in March. The NGYCA is an evidence-based program designed to provide opportunities to adolescents who have dropped out of school but demonstrate a desire to improve their potential for productive lives.

“The Academy not only benefits the students by offering a path to better themselves, it also enriches our community by bringing much-needed jobs,” added Couch.

The NGYCA was founded in 1993, to give troubled youth the opportunity to turn their lives around. The 17-month program, which includes a five-month residential phase followed by a 12-month mentoring period. During the students’ time on the CSH campus, they will be put through educational program to either attain a high school diploma or GED.

“Partnerships are essential to the success of the programs and industry that settle on Central State’s campus,” stated Couch. “This includes taking advantage of the institutes of higher learning based in Milledgeville.”

The Milledgeville Youth Challenge Academy (MYCA) is a unique model for other such programs around the country. The Georgia Department of Defense and CSH LRA have formed a partnership with Georgia Military College (GMC) to allow students who finish their high school diploma before the end of the residential term to attend college classes. The goal of the MYCA, GMC, and CSH LRA is for students to graduate the program with one semester of college credit completed.

Slated to open by May 2017, the Bostick Nursing Center (BNC), a 280-bed geriatric care facility will employ an estimated 330 people. The BNC is owned and operated by CorrectHealth, a correctional healthcare company and currently provides services to jails, prisons, and youth detention centers throughout the Southeast Region.

“The Bostick Nursing Center will bring a wide-range of jobs to our community including positions for Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA), other medical staff, and of course administrative staff,” said Couch.

The residents of the BNC will be elderly and infirm former state prisoners that continue to receive housing and medical care provided by the state. These residents are under continued care due to a lack of family or other support systems that prohibit their release.

In the past year, strides have been made in the development phase of the Georgia International Food Center (GIFC). The focus of the GIFC will be on food to promote economic growth, expand educational and research opportunities and cultivate food innovation involving “Georgia Grown” products.

“Again, I must place emphasis on forging partnerships with institutions, businesses, and government agencies that help propel growth in our programs,” observed Couch.

Just a few of the many entities partnering with the GIFC include Georgia Tech, Fort Valley State University, the University of Georgia College of Agriculture, Georgia College, the state of Georgia, and the local government of Milledgeville and Baldwin County.

Couch is both excited and optimistic for the future of the CSH campus due to the local and state support it has received. “Governor Deal and Senator Burt Jones have simply been incredible advocates for us,” said Couch. “Senator Jones sponsored SR 228 which put the property in local hands.”

SR 228 authorizes the conveyance and lease of certain state-owned real properties. “It just makes sense to place the property in the hands of the local redevelopment authority for best utilization,” commented Jones. “Local oversight and control is the best way forward for Central State.”

