

Community

Making an upgrade

County treatment center moving

BY HELEN WOLT
Staff writer

The Broward Addiction Recovery Center is one step closer to a new home.

Officials recently broke ground on a modern, two-story building in the Edgewood neighborhood of Fort Lauderdale. Completion is scheduled for 2018.

"This new facility is patient-oriented and will offer a safe and warm environment where people can comfortably work to turn their lives around and recover from what we know is a chronic disease. This is the future," said Paul Faulk, the recovery center's director.

Broward County commissioners awarded a \$20 million construction contract for the 49,000-square-foot building, which will serve 4,500 clients per year under the administration of the county's Human Services Department.

The new center comes at a time when emerging synthetic drugs are requiring lengthier detoxification stays.

"Synthetic opioid drugs are taking longer for these individuals to detox than is typically seen for straight heroin users," Faulk said.

Bed capacity will increase from 37 to 50. Housing dynamics will also improve, officials said. Gone are the dorm-style showers and rooms that sleep six to eight people.

"Now they'll be patient centered, two to a room with one shared bathroom," Faulk said. "That gives [people] dignity. Community showers are for colleges. You don't do that in a hospital recovery center."

The spacious facility will host detox, residential and day programs, admissions and assessment units and administration offices. BARC branches in Sunrise and Coral Springs will stay in operation.

Additionally, BARC will transition to a paperless medical records system that will be 100 percent online, Faulk said.

The center has been operating out of a church building for 40 years with limited space and aging equipment. Commissioners chose the spot south of downtown for its proximity to courts and hospitals after working to resolve issues for 17 years. Rocky Rodriguez, the center's substance abuse advisory board president, said, "This new facility is proof that perseverance, dedication and commitment will overcome all difficulty."

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Lasting view



ANNA COLLINS/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Mimi and John Bauer rest on their dedicated bench at Hugh Taylor Birch State Park in Fort Lauderdale, which is part of a bench campaign that raises funds for the park.

Bench program benefits state park

BY HELEN WOLT
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Friends of Birch State Park is offering the public an opportunity to make a lasting connection to the tropical oasis: Buy a bench with a plaque that sports a personal message.

So far about a dozen benches are scattered around the state park's 177-acres. The messages they carry are often rich with meaning.

Mari Mennel-Bell inscribed "The earth has music for those who listen" on a bench for her family.

"I wanted a place that when I'm gone ... would give my children and grandchildren a spiritual place to feel like they can touch base with me and sit and have a contemplative moment," she said.

Mennel-Bell said she feels a special connection to her parents at Hugh Taylor Birch Park.

"The old South Florida that Mr. Birch preserved is that old Florida that my parents loved way back in the 40s and 50s," she said.

John and Mimi Bauer memorialized their son who died in an accident as a teenager. The couple was inspired by the thousands of benches in New York City's Central Park that commemorate loved ones.

"For us it's a great consolation to go there and sit on the bench in the tranquility of the park and the remembrance of our son August Phillip Bauer," John Bauer said. "Fort Lauderdale is our city and it was his city."

Former Birch State Park Manager David Dearth and his wife Vivian Tolley-Dearth bought a bench to show their appreciation of Jim Ellis, president of the Friends of Birch board of directors.

"We bought a bench as a family in dedication of Jim for his extraordinary efforts

to bring Birch back," Dearth said. Ellis shies away from any recognition, so the family chose a subtle inscription "Jim's View."

Friends executive director Gale Butler said the nonprofit's Bring Birch Back Bench Campaign not only preserves memories, it fills a much needed void.

"There were only a handful of benches [at the park], and nowhere to rest or enjoy the view," Butler said. Funds raised will help provide trams and fix aging equipment. (Costs for a bench range from \$2,500 to \$5,000 depending on the location).

"The park is such a special place," Mennel-Bell said. "It's like a jewel that's nestled between the Intracoastal and the ocean."

For information, visit Birch-StatePark.org.

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