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Munroe-Meyer Institute marks beginning of renovations to new home

The University of Nebraska Medical Center's Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI) held a groundbreaking ceremony at 10:30 a.m. Aug. 26 to mark the beginning of renovations to MMI's new home.

The event took place at 6902 Pine St., adjacent to the University of Nebraska at Omaha's Scott Campus. Completion of the renovation is scheduled for the fall of 2020, and the building will open and begin providing patient services later that year.

As MMI begins its second century of providing services for patients with developmental and intellectual disabilities, its new home will be the first of its kind in the nation, MMI Director Karoly Mirnics, M.D., Ph.D., said.

It will be uniquely designed to facilitate integrated care for the individuals and families with these disabilities and complex health care needs that MMI serves across the lifespan, Dr. Mirnics said.

"This new facility will not only allow us to provide state-of-the-art care, but it will enable us to recruit and retain top clinicians, educators and researchers to Nebraska," Dr. Mirnics said. "Building on 100 years of service, our vision is for a center that will provide an intimate, convenient care center for our patients while providing us with the talent and facilities to have a global impact in the areas of education and research into intellectual and developmental disabilities."

Architects consulted with MMI clients and clinicians to create a plan for the building that enhances and simplifies the patient experience, as well as offering an array of services not available elsewhere in the state. Existing programs will be expanded and enhanced, while new programs and collaborations will be offered.

Among the new amenities:

- An accessible and family-centric floor plan, designed to simplify and enhance the patient's clinical experience;
- A redesigned and integrated Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders (iCASD), under the leadership of a newly recruited, nationally recognized expert in autism, where MMI professionals will provide interdisciplinary care, pulling together the various services to enhance the patient experience;
- A one-bedroom "apartment," where occupational therapists can help individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities learn and practice hands-on life skills;
- The Caring For Champions Program, a collaboration with Special Olympics that will provide sustained vision, dental and weight management services; and
- A new aquatic center and playground for clients and youth will enhance the experience for youngsters who attend Camp Munroe.

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The estimated \$86 million building costs were received through the State of Nebraska and private gifts given through the University of Nebraska Foundation. The acquisition and redevelopment of the building will effectively double the institute's current size to 220,078 square feet in response to the exponential growth in the population that needs services. The University of Nebraska Foundation continues to seek contributions to support the programmatic costs associated with the institute.

Major donors included:

Lead Benefactors

- William and Ruth Scott Family Foundation
- Weitz Family Foundation
- Suzanne & Walter Scott Foundation
- Hattie B. Munroe Foundation

Principal Benefactors

- Clarkson Regional Health Services
- Holland Foundation
- Robert B. Daugherty Foundation
- The Lozier Foundation

Dr. Mirnics thanked supporters as MMI moves into its new building and into its second century of providing services.

“MMI stands on the shoulders of giants. This new facility will allow us to build on the seminal work in clinical care, education and research started by the pioneers who came before us,” Dr. Mirnics said. “This new home will enable us to achieve our supporters’ vision of a state-of-the-art center, multiplying our existing strengths to allow us to continue in our mission of ‘changing lives and transforming futures’ of families with disabilities and complex health care needs.

“Our community’s generosity made this dream possible, and our shared vision is something we greatly cherish. On behalf of MMI staff, patients and families – thank you.”

UNMC Chancellor Jeffrey P. Gold, M.D., called the new building a doorway into MMI’s second century.

“Since its beginnings, MMI has worked to improve the lives of the people and families it serves,” Dr. Gold said. “This new home gives it a much larger space and increased versatility and flexibility, but the core of the MMI mission – helping those with intellectual and developmental disabilities to overcome challenges, to live fuller, richer lives – remains the same. All of UNMC is excited to see how our colleagues at MMI will continue to grow in their new home to provide even more effective clinical care, education and research, all in the name of enhancing the lives of the people and families they serve.”