

Black History



The late Fred Turner



The late Annie B. Jones Turner



The late Billie Jean Bennett Carter



Sammie Waggoner Attaway

1st Blacks Employed with Rusk State Hospital following letter to Justice Department

Rusk, TX.- In 1961 Virgie Gupton Williams applied for employment at Rusk State Hospital. No black people were employed at the facility at that time, although it was opened in 1919 by the conversion of the Rusk Penitentiary buildings into a hospital for the care of the "Negro insane". She was told indirectly that blacks could not be hired at that facility. After many attempts with no success, she wrote the Department of Justice Washington D. C..

Soon after, the racial barriers were weakened with the hiring of Eddie Artis Colston and Billy Bennett Carter as direct patient care staff. Fred Turner and Annie B. Turner were hired about 1962. The very determined Virgie Williams was finally hired about 1963. Sammie Attaway was hired in 1964. According to state records, the average daily patient count in 1964 was 1,942.

Early in its history the institution included a general hospital for the care of the acutely sick, an infirmary for aged and decrepit cases, a tubercular hospital for the care of white men and women, and a tubercular hospital for black men and women. A chapel and recreational hall were later added.

Linda Brown Roberson was the first Black Rusk State Hospital Unit Director 1983.

Walter Session was the first black administrative technician in 1980.

Earnest Mitchell Black head of security.

Rusk State Hospital is now an equal opportunity employer under the umbrella of DSHS. In September 2006, the hospital was funded for a new, 35-bed forensic unit which added 167 employees making a total of 1000 job positions and ranked the hospital as the largest

employer in Cherokee County. The hospital has the funding, staff and capacity to serve 337 patients daily.

Ted Debbs is RSH Superintendent.

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