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Contact: Ember Davis, Marketing Coordinator, Drew Memorial Hospital

(870) 460-4871

edavis@drewmemorial.org

Franklin joins Drew Memorial Hospital

Monticello native Jennifer Franklin recently began as the new director of Transitions, Drew Memorial Hospital's outpatient geriatric psychiatric department.

Franklin graduated from Monticello High School and went on to UAM where she received her Bachelor's degree. She is also a graduate of UALR with a Master of Social Work and a licensed certified social worker. She has 11 years of experience in mental health settings, where she has worked with children, adolescents, adults, and some seniors.

"I'm excited to join Drew Memorial Hospital and be part of such an essential organization in our community," Franklin said. "I look forward to expanding my knowledge and experience serving our older adult population in Transitions."

The Transitions program, which began in 2008, is located in the Allied Health Building on the north side of Drew Memorial Hospital. It serves older adults by offering them weekly therapeutic group activities and one-on-one therapy sessions with a licensed therapist. Participants meet with a psychiatrist to receive a psychiatric evaluation and treatment plan and to discuss medication management. Prospective participants typically have no out-of-pocket costs after Medicare and secondary coverage.

"I have already seen patients benefiting from the consistent group interaction with peers. Along with the psychiatric sessions, it helps to know you're not alone in experiencing the challenges you face in growing older." Franklin explained that it is typical to have a patient start the program because of the stress associated with a major life change, such as moving to an assisted-living facility, the loss a loved one, decline in mobility, loss of independence or other issues often associated with aging. "Transitions is a place where seniors can get help adjusting to very new situations that can take a serious physical and mental toll," she said. "And the best part is, they are in a space where these situations aren't at all uncommon. Knowing they will be able to share a meal weekly with people who have similar challenges can make patients so much more hopeful."

Franklin sees her role as director as someone who can help educate the community about the program, ensure its high quality care and staff, and hopefully increase its services over time. As the manager of the intensive outpatient psych department, she also serves on the hospital's management council.

Wade Smith, once director of Transitions and current Chief Operations Officer, explains, "Our goal for Transitions is to become the go-to location for geriatric outpatient psychiatric services." He said, "We are extremely convenient to many communities in Southeast Arkansas, and offering patient transportation makes us even more accessible. Now that Jennifer has joined our team, we will be able to continue to explore an expansion of the program."

Franklin lives in Monticello and is married with five children/stepchildren. She enjoys spending time with her family and friends. While she loves to travel, she is also a fan of staying close to home where she keeps busy watching her children compete in dance and basketball.

People with interest in the Transitions program for themselves or for a loved one may contact Franklin for an in-home evaluation. More information can be found at www.drewmemorial.org/transitions.