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NEWS RELEASE

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MORE THAN 100 LOST SOULS CLAIMED IN 14 MONTHS SINCE CREMAINS MEMORIAL DEDICATION

Woodburn Woman to be Buried Beside Her Parents September 11

(SALEM) – Since the dedication of the Oregon State Hospital Cremains Memorial 14 months ago, the cremated remains of more than 100 individuals have been returned to their families, Native American tribes or other groups, Oregon Senate President Peter Courtney reported today.

“They’ve finally made it home. Now they can rest,” Courtney said. “They were banished in life. They were forgotten in death. They were lost souls. Thanks to the creation of the memorial and worldwide attention it received last year, they’ve been found. They’ve been reclaimed and honored for their sacrifice.”

One of those who has been found will be laid to rest in the Belle Passi Cemetery in Woodburn on Friday, September 11. Sarah Emily Hindman died at the Oregon State Hospital in 1969. With no living relatives, her cremated remains were never claimed.

Last year, the Belle Passi Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution became aware of Hindman’s story. She had been one of the eight founders of the Belle Passi chapter in 1934. When they couldn’t locate living relatives, the group sought and won the legal right to claim Hindman’s cremains.

She will be buried Saturday next to her parents, who died in 1936 and 1937. Her parents’ graves are marked by a single headstone. It includes her father Asa’s name and his date of death; her mother Sadie’s name and her date of death; and the name “S. Emily” with no date of death.

“Sarah Emily Hindman was meant to be buried with her parents. Thanks to the dedication and compassion of the women of the Belle Passi chapter, another lost soul will be returned home. It’s a remarkable story about Oregonians taking care of Oregonians,” Courtney said.

It was during a tour of the old Oregon State Hospital in late 2004, that Courtney insisted on seeing what was inside “a shed on the grounds.” Inside, Courtney, former House Speaker Karen Minis and members of the media found more than 3,500 copper canisters containing cremated remains. Over the years the remains had been buried and exhumed and eventually stored unceremoniously in the small locked building at OSH.

The discovery sparked renewed interest in mental health treatment in the state and conditions at the 120-year-old state hospital, where the 1975 film “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest” was filmed. The 1883 hospital was torn down in 2008 and replaced with a new state-of-the-art facility which opened in 2010.

In the nine previous years since Courtney discovered the “Room of Lost Souls” at OSH, the remains of less than 200 former patients had been repatriated to their families.

In July 2014, a memorial honoring the individuals was dedicated on the OSH grounds. News stories about the cremains and the dedication of the memorial were printed in newspapers and aired on radio and television stations around the world. As a result, 106 ceramic urns containing cremated remains – mostly of former OSH patients – have been repatriated to family members or community organizations in the last year.

“Through their sad and tragic lives they led us out of the wilderness of mental health. Without them, we would not have a new state hospital. We would not be improving mental health care in this state,” Courtney said. “Oregon owes these saints for their suffering. Our ultimate goal should be that every one of them is claimed and returned to their family. They all deserve to go home.”