

THE LONG LIVING LEGACY OF LAURELTON STATE HOSPITAL

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“It was a house for those who could not take care of themselves, for those who heard voices, who had strange thoughts and did strange things. The house was meant to keep them in. Once they came, they never left.” -Madeleine Roux. This quote was not directly written about Laurelton, but was written about institutions just like it. The Laurelton Center was an establishment for feeble-minded women of childbearing age. It was a place to teach the residents how to live and function in the real world while giving them housing and jobs. The Laurelton Center will catch any traveller's eye as they drive down route 45 in Union County. The beautiful landscapes and hand built stonework of the buildings is hard to miss. The only building seen from the roadside is the administration, while all the others are hidden among the trees. The village opened in 1917, for feeble-minded women of childbearing age.¹ The Laurelton Center of 1917 is nothing like it is today. The buildings sit to rot as most roofs leak and many floors become hard to walk on. The Laurelton State Hospital was a place a lot of people knew about, but very few talk about; it is a place with many unasked questions and many unknown answers. This is the untold story of the lost Laurelton Center.

The Founders

The world during the time of the building of the Laurelton Center was in the midst of the biggest conflict up to its time. President Woodrow Wilson declared war against Germany in April of 1917. The women's suffrage movement was at its peak, and by 1919 women were given the right to vote. However, women were still a long way from being viewed as equal to men. As a Bucknell graduate, Dr. Mary Moore Wolfe traveled to Michigan to one of the only medical schools that accepted women. Once she returned to Pennsylvania she spent her residency in the Women's Division at Norristown State Hospital. Seeing the treatment of the women led her to

¹ Johnny Joo, “Empty Halls Of Pennsylvania's Laurelton State Village Hospital,” Architectural Afterlife, January 22, 2020, <https://architecturalafterlife.com/2020/01/laurelton-state-village/>.

testify in court for the better judgment and protection of her girls. "Wolfe joined with other suffragists to establish the Women's Suffrage Party of Union County." Dr. Mary Wolfe had a vision and she was "Determined to make Laurelton Village a place of rehabilitation and not permanent segregation."² When she returned to Hartley Township, in 1913, Dr. Mary Wolfe fought the state politicians in remarks of opening a publicly funded establishment.³ In 1914, the construction for The Center began on 230 acres of unbroken soil. The starting cost of The Center was estimated to be about \$379,864 in total for both construction and project costs. Dr. Mary Wolfe cared greatly about the care of patients with mental disabilities.

Dr. Mary Wolfe could not have done it all if it was not for her right hand man Dr. Oliver W. H. Glover. Without him the village may have never been self-sufficient. Dr. Glover was on the lookout for some tillable property in the vicinity of the Laurelton Center. He ended up raising \$3,000 to be able to purchase 250 acres of land in the surrounding areas. He later donated this land to the village so the girls could farm the land.⁴ This act of kindness got him on the "Board of Trustees" at The Center. When he passed away in 1949, he was not forgotten and got a cottage named after him now known as Glover Hall.

Girls In The Beginning

Laurelton continued to be built up throughout the Roaring 20s and the Great Depression⁵. During this time, attitudes towards women changed considerably. People at this time could barely afford to feed themselves let alone any children. The families that were too poor would have their daughters sent to The Village. The Roaring 20's was a prime time for the cities, but

² Christina Larocco, "Biographical Sketch of Mary Moore Wolfe," Biographical Sketch of Mary Moore Wolfe | Alexander Street Documents (Christina Larocco, 2021).

³ Haley Stodart, "From Special Collections/University Archives: Mary Wolfe, Bucknell University Trustee " Library and Information Technology," Bucknell Blogs, October 15, 2018.

⁴ Tony Shively , "Old Doc Glover," The Millmont Times (Tony Shively, October 1, 2004).

⁵ A&E Television Networks, "Great Depression History," History.com (A&E Television Networks, October 29, 2009).

people from this rural part of Pennsylvania did not know much about it. Girls became flappers, and it was not seen as uncommon for a woman to throw herself at you for money. When you come back to the small state of Pennsylvania women who worked the streets would be sent to the village almost immediately. Women grew up watching their mother's and did not have money for school, so their mental capacity and I.Q was lower than average. The women in this area were so conservative that if her husband died, and the neighbors wife died in childbirth then it was just proper for them to get married. Women could not fend for themselves so they were required to have a man in their lives and those people nearby were all they knew.⁶

Hysteria

During this time period mental illnesses were not known about, and they were seen as a bad thing. Hysteria was thought to be the reason for mental illnesses in women in the early 20th century. Sigmund Freud was considered to be the Father of Psychology. He believed hysteria was the consequence of the lack of conception and motherhood. Hysteria was thought to be a disorder that was caused by a lack of libidinal evolution and failure of conception. In this time hysterical women were thought to not be able to maintain mature relationships. Before World War II, hysteria were thought to be indicators of national decline, like the fall of the Stock Market and the Great Depression.

Doctors Signing

For women to be placed into The Center a doctor would have to sign off that she lacked mental capabilities, so almost any woman could have been placed in since women were already seen as "crazy." It was not until, about the 1950's, that the mental health system changed once again and required that the court must have proof of two doctors signatures.⁷

⁶ Emilie Jansma, Personal Interview, February 24,2021

⁷ Emilie Jansma, Personal Interview.

Girls Throughout The Years

Women that were brought to The Laurelton Center either loved it or hated it and there was no in between. The girls that were taken off the streets tended to have a horrible time, but girls that were saved from a bad home of abuse were grateful for the village.⁸ During this time period, girls were not seen as equals to men and many women that came to the village were because they were pregnant. Once the child was born they would ask the mothers family if they wanted to keep the baby. If the family did not want it or could not get in contact with them then they were sent to a catholic church privately where the baby would be adopted out quietly. At Laurelton State Hospital the clients were put into categories to determine if progression was able to happen. Figure 1, states the prolonged reasons girls were placed here were for epilepsy, blindness, mental illnesses, cardiacs, cripples, and just any individual considered low-grade. The girls were placed into categories of psychopaths and psychotics. It was believed at The Village that if someone was a psychopath they “can not learn from past experience and periodically her bad behavior pattern is repeated.”⁹ The clients that were the problem girls in the cottages were thought to be psychopathic. Psychopaths were taken to Johnston cottage to restrain them, or they kept them in their cottage for safe housing and separation from the outer society. In figure 1, the graph shows that during the time period there were approximately 15 residents who were considered to be psychopaths. The psychologist stated “Punishment is a matter of great discretion as it avails little with the girl who can just not control her behaviour.”¹⁰ The other category of psychotic residents were determined by “A type of girl who needs understanding and

⁸ Emilie Jansma, Personal Interview.

⁹ Steen M; “Historical Perspectives on Women and Mental Illness and Prevention of Depression in Women, Using a Feminist Framework,” Issues in mental health nursing (U.S. National Library of Medicine), accessed February 22, 2021.

¹⁰ Tyler Stump, “Reform Takes a Village,” Pennsylvania Heritage Magazine, December 17, 2020.

training over a long period to substitute good habits for bad habits and social irresponsibility.”¹¹

Psychotics were trained and took classes in the school to gain a better understanding of basic tasks needed in life. The girls would be tested 2-3 times a year to see if they made progress and if they moved up on the scale of “Idiots, imbeciles, low or high moron, borderline, dull normal, or average.” The girls worked daily and the ones that were able to would switch jobs weekly.

Figure 1: Reasons for Prolonged Residence Over 5 Years Ending in 1948¹²

Reasons for Prolonged Residence	1-15 years	20-25 years	25-30 years	30-35 years	35-40 years	40 years and over	TOTALS
Too Low Grade	2	66	55	41	41	42	253
Unsatisfactory Parole		1	11	19	12	7	50
Delinquent	4	34	34	8	10	1	89
Psychopaths		2	6	2	5		15
Personality Difficulties		7	8	12	5	5	37
Mentally Ill			2		2	2	6
Cardiacs	1			3	6	1	11
TB-Active		1	1		2		4
TB-Arrested					2	1	3
Syphilis Tertiary			4	3		2	9
Epilepsy		1			2		3
Neurological Cases					2	2	4
Deaf			2		1	2	5
Poor Vision			2	3		3	8
Cripples		1	2	1	6	4	14
Other Organic Defects				4	5	4	13
Speech Defect Only				1			1
Possible Parole Material		20	16	3	2		41
TOTALS	7	133	143	104	103	76	566

¹¹ Steen M; “Historical Perspectives on Women and Mental Illness and Prevention of Depression in Women, Using a Feminist Framework,” accessed February 22, 2021.

¹² Effie C Ireland, *Laurelton State Village Annual Report, 1946th-1948th ed.* (Laurelton , PA: Effie C Ireland , 1946),36.

Tasks/ Jobs

As the residents stayed at the Laurelton State Village they were given tasks based on their skill level. The jobs consisted of laundry, sewing, gardening, cooking, baking, farming, canning and many more. Some girls with lower capabilities had one set job for their life unless they showed some progress. "These girls thrived for titles because it made them feel important." The reason for this was, as they grew up not a lot of them had money or a job and never had anything to be proud of, so giving them a name made them feel as if they had a meaning in life. Due to state laws and regulations, that were constantly changing. The laws changed based on how patients were cared for and how hard you can work them. Also the laws changed so that the residents would not be as isolated and were around more outside people. When the girls first began working in the early days of The Center they were paid approximately 50 cents. This was a way to teach them about money and allow them to treat themselves at the canteen and purchase a candy bar or soda with their hard earned cash. During this period, people with disabilities were not allowed to be paid minimum wage.

Events

The Center was not meant to be a prison for the residents, instead it was meant to have the same aspects of a normal lifestyle. A special opportunity for the residents was when the fair came to the village. Multiple vendors and rides were set up on the property for the residents to enjoy. They could eat some popcorn, and ride the carousel if they were able. An employee would sign them out for the day and be their supervision as well as a friend.¹³ The Center held an event called "mayday" which is similar to prom. The prom was held in the rec hall, and all the girls put on their best white dresses to dance the night away. At the end, just like a modern prom they would nominate a "may queen" or prom queen. The girl chosen was usually higher on the scale

¹³ Joyce Ewig, Phone Call, February 18, 2021

of titles. Once chosen that girl was usually sent out on parole or sent home all together. Another popular past time activity were the plays the girls would put on for their peers. To be in a play the girls would join the dramatic club.¹⁴ Only the best plays were selected to be shown to the entire group, since there were no movies during this time.¹⁵ Patients were given so much joy that seems normal but is a huge deal to them because a lot of them came from nothing and this finally gave them something

Treatments

The Laurelton Center ran multiple tests on the clients that were at that facility. One of the categories was hydrotherapy. Hydrotherapy was to treat depression; headaches; stomach problems; joint, muscle, and nerve problems; sleep disorders; and stress. People also use it for relaxation and to maintain health.¹⁶ At Laurelton they wrapped the residents in towels and put them into cold water as their form of hydrotherapy. In the school building, all the way in the back of the top hallway, there is a two-way mirror where the psychologist would observe the clients while they were in school. Many institutions throughout the state believed in sterilization, but not in the way many would think. Most people when they think of sterilization is the extensive cleaning of materials, but instead at most institutions it is the sterilization of humans. This was considered a form of extreme birth control, and women of child bearing age would get a tubal ligation, or more commonly known as getting their tubes tied. This was also done to men as well but they have a vasectomy, which is the snipping of the vas deferens. Laurelton did not partake in sterilization, instead they were mostly segregated based on sex. Some medical practices that were partaken were the mixing of different medications then giving them to the residents as they

¹⁴ Mary Vanuxem, *Biennial Report of the Laurelton State Village Laurelton, Pennsylvania 1922-1924* (Laurelton , Pa: Mary Vanuxem, 1922), 24.

¹⁵ Laurelton State Village, "Full Text of 'Report of the Laurelton State Village : at Laurelton, Union County, Pennsylvania, for the Biennial Period Ending ...'," Full text of "Report of the Laurelton State Village : at Laurelton, Union County, Pennsylvania, for the biennial period ending ...", June 26, 2017.

¹⁶ Kathleen Romito, "Hydrotherapy," Hydrotherapy | Michigan Medicine, November 16, 2020.

saw fit. . Mary Wolfe stated that sometimes they would give the patients a “little vacation” to the hospital where they would give them sodium dilantin and phenobarbital. These drugs were given to people that were epileptic to control seizures, but they should never be given together. This caused the girls to pass out for long periods of time to control their behaviors. Once you entered the cottages they were also designed so that they could do some of their medical practices amongst the cottages and the residents' living quarters. Every cottage looked similar inside and out, all consisting of an open floor plan. This was for many reasons, one being that the physically disabled needed more space than the ones with only mentally disabilities. The real reason most had an open floor plan was so that the doctors could have all the girls in one room and constantly watch over them, and record progress. The doctors would supervise the girls in the cottage doing everyday tasks so they would know if they got to move up on the scale.

Employees

When talking to someone that worked at or experienced anything about the Laurelton State Hospital they will all say the same thing “it was a great place to work” and “it was such a beautiful place.” When The Center first opened it was one of the very few places in Hartley Township where residents of Union County and surrounding areas could get a job. This was because at the time of World War I starting and then the Great Depression the nation was trying to bring themselves out of a very deep hole that they had dug. At the time this area was not a very booming area, and honestly still isn't until this day. These employees were dedicated to their jobs and were willing to come early, or stay late whenever was necessary. Employees from over the mountain, or through the valley came in any weather conditions just for the job they loved. They have such a pride for the village that most employees will not tell a single bad thing about their work environment. The only problem any employees ever mentioned was that the

state regulations were constantly changing and they just could not keep up. Very few employees may say it was horrible but it also depended on the type of people you worked with, like the criminally insane were much harder to control and most people did not find that enjoyable. Caroline Wenrick, once an employee, was known for her full of fun carpools and even without a license everyone wanted to jam out with her.¹⁷ Still to this day she lives to tell her wonderful stories about her experience and how much she loved the Laurelton Center. Every individual you talk to only addresses the clients as kids or their little girls to show them as a sign of family. The bond between these employees was inseparable; many of them would grab dinner at the Spruce Run Inn together.¹⁸ The superintendents hosted a Christmas dinner for the employees at the residents cottage. This was a time for them to have fun and share memories of the moments they have shared over the years.

Scandals

With any institution there are always some controversial topics, like “how patients were treated?” Laurelton had a few scandals that cost some superintendents their jobs. Some stories came out about The Center that involved the treatment of those girls. In 1955, when the girls were being troublemakers or just disrespectful they would bathe them in freezing cold water. There were newspaper articles posted about Johnston cottage. This cottage was where they held the most criminally insane individuals. They said that clients were being whipped by wet towels in the face after they committed a rule infraction.¹⁹ A lawsuit was filed against Laurelton because they were keeping one girl who was capable of going on parole. This girl was such a good worker that Laurelton did not want to let her leave so they made her stay.²⁰ A previous Laurelton

¹⁷ Emilie Jansma, Personal Interview.

¹⁸ Joyce Ewig, Phone Call.

¹⁹ Altoona Tribune, “1955 ‘Concentration Camp Conditions.’” *Newspapers.com*, 26 Feb. 1955.

²⁰ Shamokin News-Dispatch, “Marie Faust Habeas Corpus.” *Newspapers.com*, 5 Feb. 1930.

Company firefighter stated that they would get random calls to come up to Johnston Cottage. They would have the girls come stand outside the building and get hosed by a tanker because they were “being rowdy.”²¹ Many scandals were not even publicised, and the ones that were did not necessarily ruin The Center's reputation.

Men

Once the village turned into the Laurelton State School and Hospital things began to change. World War II just ended in 1945, and soldiers were coming home.²² Martin Luther King Jr. led the Civil Rights Movement trying to bring civil equality around the United States. Mental health laws were constantly changed. Males entered residency into The Center in 1969.²³ Men entered for two reasons, one being they were severely disabled since birth, or they suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and shell shock from the World Wars. There were about 10-15 patients that had to spend their whole lives in the hospital because they were incapable of almost everything.

Farms

Later once the men entered The Village, the women were no longer permitted to work on the farms because that was a man's job. There were five farms in total: dairy, a piggery, a henery, truck garden, and orchard. Each farm grew a certain crop other than the garden and orchard, this was because the soil was different at the other farms. An example would be the Pig Farm, where they were responsible for growing only potatoes. In the truck garden they would grow many different vegetables to provide for The Village. They grew cabbage, tomatoes, green beans, etc. Then all the vegetables and fruits were sent to the cannery. They saved and preserved

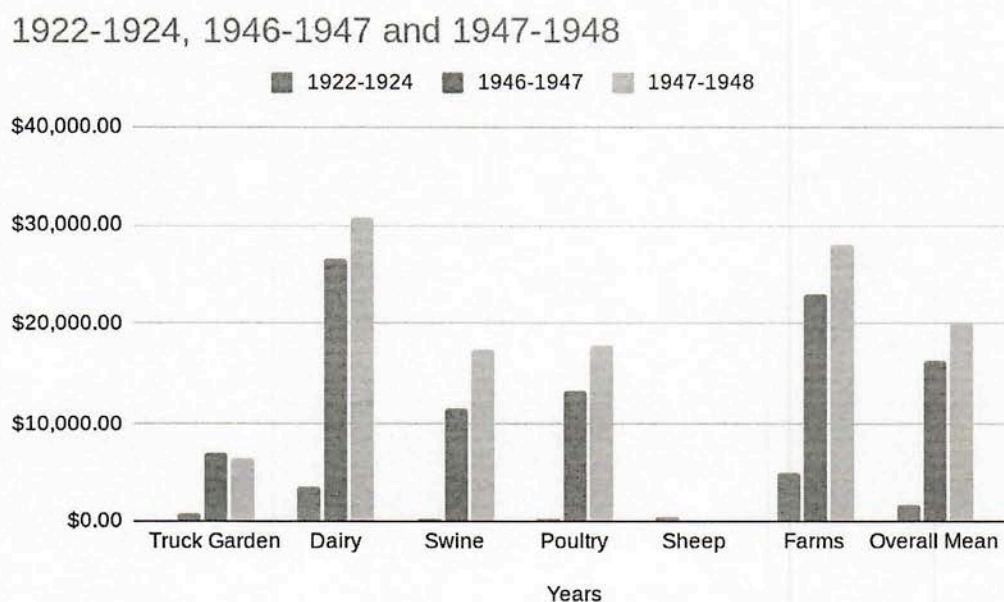
²¹ Joyce Ewig, Phone Call.

²² U.S. Department of State. U.S. Department of State. Accessed February 22, 2021.

²³ Johnny Joo, “Empty Halls Of Pennsylvania's Laurelton State Village Hospital,” *Architectural Afterlife*, January 22, 2020.

everything so that they can keep a helping supply.²⁴ According to figure 2, over the years The Village had many expenses, but as time marched on, prices increased and the state started to give less and less money to fund The State School. When the state finally decided that institutions like this could not work the clients anymore things went downhill for the village.²⁵ The girls had nothing to do all day so their mental capacity tripped and many of the girls went insane. A group of five girls decided that they would trash the rec room in their cottage. Their action showed the importance of Dr. Mary Wolfe's dream, which was to help women work and do all levels of tasks so they could be placed into the real world.

Figure 2: Agricultural Expenses Compared²⁶



²⁴ Mary Morre Wolfe, *Biennial Report of the Pennsylvania Village for Feeble-Minded Women Laurelton, Pennsylvania 1921* (Laurelton, Pa: Mary Moore Wolfe, 1921), 18.

²⁵ Micalee Sullivan, "Community Interviews: The Village at Laurelton," *West End Quarterly*, March 2017, History And Folklore In The West End Of Union County edition, sec. The Village, Part I, pp. 1-16.

²⁶ Laurelton State Village Annual Reports, 13-14, 67-70

Current State of the Laurelton Center

The Laurelton Center is not what someone would now expect it to be. It is probably thought that the one building that is seen while driving on route 45 was The Center as a whole. Which is in fact very wrong, that building was one out of the 52 others that are still barely standing, that building was called the Administration Building. Most people would not have ever guessed that sitting in the sounding wooded area is countless more buildings just barely standing. From the outside, everything looks great, besides a couple blown out windows and broken doors but after entering, the inside is a complete mess. The building also had that old musty smell to it that lingered everywhere. The doors with windows in them had glass scattered everywhere. There were boxes and boxes filled with books and old reports from over the years. Things that they used such as the bathtubs for the employees that stayed in that building. Along with key holders were disgusting and destroyed with keys thrown everywhere. It is considerably crazy that so many things from the center are still there. Yet at the same time, how much stuff was not left in the buildings and cottages. There were very few chairs, no beds, and filing cabinets completely riddled of their files. The Admin Building had broken windows in almost every office, and asbestos on the way up to the 3rd floor. The lower levels in the Admin Building the cleaner it got and less stuff was scattered throughout the basement.

In the hospital, what would immediately catch someone's eye is the bars on the top floor windows. Those were placed there so people would not jump out and escape. There were tons of patient rooms on each floor, and most floors looked the same. In the basement is a morgue where the doors remain swung open. In a back room is the autopsy room and a sterilization room where vials of solution lay scattered on the floor. In the remaining floors there is a sun room with a single chair, and examination rooms with the curtains ripped off the tracks.

The rec hall, which is dedicated in honor of Dr. Mary Wolfe, is slowly falling apart from the holes in the roof to the warping floors. The theatre which is in the Rec Hall had ice frozen on the floor and snow piled on chairs. The walls were peeling and collapsing in. In the basement, the gym is much worse. The floors have gotten moisture and now look like waves. You can't even see the court floor covered in decay from the falling roof. This building is in the worst condition out of all the buildings.

The school was almost fascinating, being one of the last structures built on the property in 1969 it is newer than the rest. The floor tiles had begun to peel up and many were flung throughout the halls. Half the lockers were swung open but a few still remained closed. In the back room of the school is a chalkboard with many amazing drawings people have done over the years. There is something eerie about the room that has the two way mirror and an office on the other side.

Education

When the school was still open, the residents that were at school-age, which was considered to be 22 and under would have to take classes through the day. The school Principal, Ed Lint had a good reputation. Yet, it was mandatory for the program in the education building to be supervised by the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit, or I.U. for short. In 1973, under the right of education Laurelton was given three teacher aids. Dick Devet was a former teacher of 10 years at the school of the Laurelton State Hospital. He taught students with severe mental disabilities and that were non-verbal with the help of the aids that were provided to him by the state. In 1986, the Inclusive Movement was starting to be put into action.²⁷ The Movement was meant to "include" students with severe disabilities into public school. Before 1986, there were

²⁷ Douglas Fuchs, *Inclusive Schools Movement and the Radicalization of Special Education Reform* (George Peabody College of Vanderbilt University, July 1993).

only kids considered to be EMR (Educable Mentally Retarded) that were in public schools. Students that were TMR (Trainable Mentally Retarded) were audibly and visually handicapped students were taught in church buildings. Students at The Laurelton State Village that were school age up to 21 were sent to public schools for teaching. This left all the residents that were 22 and up remaining at The Center.²⁸

Cemetery

Easily overlooked, many forgotten, one of the long living questions of the Laurelton Center is "What happened to the Individuals that have passed on?" All that remains of the deceased burial grounds are four, low lying, 8x4" headstones. Each with a single name engraved, and are respectfully placed upon the hill in the local Harleton Cemetery traveling East off of Route 45. The women that lie here to rest are Julia Carbonetti, Bernadette Koch, Ida Bennicoff, and Matilda Toomey. Between these many women lie many babies who have since passed on or were stillborn. This was the only place the people were buried if they were not sent back to their own county. These are just a few of the many that have since passed on at Laurelton State Hospital through the years, but these are a seldom amount that have been discovered.²⁹

Closing

Laurelton was not the first State School to close but it was before many in Pennsylvania. The first State School to close was Pennhurst due to a lawsuit of the 8th amendment. The 8th amendment is there can be no cruel or unusual punishments. Pennhurst got involved in a lawsuit known as Halderman v. Pennhurst State hospital. This was filed because a family came to visit their child and saw bruises on their body and reported it. The court later found out the establishment was overcrowded, understaffed, and lacked programs needed for habilitation.³⁰

²⁸ Dick Devett, Phone Call, February 18, 2021.

²⁹ Emilie Jansma, Personal Interview.

³⁰ "Halderman v. Pennhurst State School & Hospital." Disability Justice, August 11, 2020.

Laurelton closed in 1998, because they did not have enough money to keep reinventing the buildings. In 2006, the property was purchased by Mountain Valley Incorporated for \$1.76 million, with plans to turn it into a dude ranch, and potential golf course. Once checking how much to repair the buildings, and finding out that it would cost roughly \$7 million, Mountain Valley had to shut down this idea. They later stripped the buildings of all scrap metal and left not much behind. In 2014, Bishop Jack Wisor tried to do the Just for Jesus Challenge. This would have turned the place into a homeless center, or even a place for drug rehabilitation.³¹ However, there was a petition of Union County residents that signed against the project shutting it down. Also, around 2006, many of Pennsylvania's State Hospitals began to close. There was a downsizing of Pennsylvania's public mental health system. This was because of the introduction to more advanced psychiatric drugs that decreased the need of treatment in hospitals. A popular hospital that later closed was Allentown, and since the closure a few years ago it has been demolished. Many hospitals do not last long after closure and are eventually destroyed. Fortunately, Laurelton is one of the few that are still left standing. The side effects to the closure of these establishments are long living. Such as, 800 employees lost their jobs after the Laurelton Center shut down and many patients were sent to group homes, and other hospitals.³² They were primarily sent to Selinsgrove Center which was meant for epileptics, Muncy which was for the criminals, and the last option was Hamburg and that was a tuberculosis hospital. Some of the people that thrived in these hospitals deteriorated into people who lacked the proper care they needed. Many patients were left homeless on the streets, and some were put into prison. On the upside of the closure is the development of a ton of new businesses and companies who are trying to help people who were in Laurelton's facility. Shared Supports Inc. out of Sunbury is not

³¹ Author: Amanda Kelley, "Residents Fighting Back Against Possible Homeless Shelter," wne.com, February 4, 2014.

³² Joyce Ewig, Phone Call.

a direct product of the Laurelton Center closing, but because of this happening they realized people with disabilities needed a place to feel welcome and something to help them start their life. Shared Supports Inc. leading provider of services to people living with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Shared Support, Inc. is licensed by the Department of Human Services. They deliver high quality, innovative services specifically designed to fit the unique needs of each person they support such as finding housing and lifesharing. Suncom Industries Inc out of Northumberland is a nonprofit, human services agency. They help people with developmental and physical disabilities improve the quality of their lives. Their goal is to provide vocational training and skill development for individuals to grow to their fullest potential. As Dick Devett likes to say, these industries “give them the life they deserve.”³³

Even after 23 years, people are still looking for parents, grandparents, and even siblings. This place holds memories, and in some cases, loved ones. There are Facebook groups made up for discussion of the Laurelton Center because after years of closure people still have a wide fascination with the place. There are websites made up by urban explorers who have visited the village and share facts and pictures from their visits. People are constantly trying to trespass and ask for permission to visit The Center but it is never granted. It was a privilege to get a tour of the grounds, by a good friend of ours who used to do maintenance for the grounds. A local newspaper The Daily Item even posted an article called “Remembering the Laurelton Center” and it was published in 2020. This place may seem forgotten, but the relevance is long-lasting. Many people’s passions for the Laurelton Center still live on to this day and even greater at the moment, due to the company that previously owned the property going bankrupt a few years ago. In 2021, the Laurelton Center is now up for sheriff sale on March 30, 2021, because they now owe three years worth of back taxes. The property was sold for \$1,005,000. It makes people sick

³³ Dick Devett, Phone Call.

to their stomach to see how this wonderful place was left to rot. The next time anyone drives by and they think that place is abandoned and has no value, just remember this is a place of stories and long lost beauty that no one will forget.

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