



Michael Ueda/Camarillo Daily News

Left, the Camarillo State Hospital as it appeared in 1937. Above, Alan Murray, chief of central

services at the hospital, stands in one of the hospital's courtyards.

# No more 'Cuckoo's Nest'

## Camarillo State Hospital has undergone many changes over the years

By SHARON CHING  
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Since the movie "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" was filmed at the Camarillo State Hospital, it seems the public generally sees mental institutions through Jack Nicholson eyes.

Society appears to have an exaggerated and even distorted view of how state mental hospitals are run.

"I get film studios calling me up and wanting to borrow a straight jacket or padded cell for their movie. I've been here since 1963 and I've never seen those things," said Myron Deimmett, executive assistant at the hospital.

The Camarillo State Hospital and Developmental Center tries to teach its patients job skills that will apply to the outside world.

"They come here because they can't function in an acceptable way in the community," Deimmett said. "Our job is to stabilize them and get them back into the community. There's no need to keep the clients here."

In 1988, 821 mentally disabled patients were admitted to Camarillo State Hospital, and 758 were discharged. A total of 104 developmentally disabled were admitted and

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99 were discharged.

This year, from Jan. 1 to July 31, the hospital admitted 440 new mentally disabled patients and discharged 458. Sixty-two developmentally disabled were admitted in that time and 55 were discharged.

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In addition to open houses, the hospital give tours of the facility.

Walking around the spacious, well-kept grounds, one notices that some patients have the freedom to walk

around. Very few have that privilege and it can be taken away.

"They have to earn that right. Each client will have an annual review done. His psychiatrists, parents and doctors will meet and make a plan for the client," Murray said.

In addition to determining medical needs, rehabilitation and therapy, the doctors will also decide if the patient is suitable to have campus privileges.

With the hospital's goal of community placement, the staff has various programs available in the areas of art, dental and packaging and assembly work.

The patients receive on the job training as painters and maintenance grounds keepers.

"We're trying to teach marketable skills. You can

place them back in the community, but without work and basic literary skills they can't make it," Murray said.

Patients can also get training for the fast food service. Currently the hospital contracts out with 60 businesses in Los Angeles and Ventura counties.

"We transport them in the morning with a staff person to help them. Eventually we will phase out the job coach and the client will work on his own," Murray said.

Within the past five years Murray has seen more mental hospitals using less medication and sedation for patients.

"Sometimes you have to use medication because they have an illness or because of their behavior," Murray said. "But we try other techniques for behavior modification."

"They are never over-sedated," said Vergie Yates, who works in vocational services. "Sometimes they may get too violent — it's on an individual basis."

When Yates started at the hospital 40 years ago, some lobotomies were performed.

"We're just focusing on getting them a job when they get out so they're not a burden on the tax payer."