Local Health Center One Of Best In U.S.

By JO ANN RAY

"This is probably the best day treatment center for mental patients in the United States," the president of the American Psychiatric Association said of the Lafayette Mental Health Center when he visited it in 1968.

The Center, located at 314 Brook Avenue, was the first mental day hospital in the country. It began as a pilot program in 1959 to determine whether a day hospital and out-patient clinic could meet the critical need for psychiatric care in this area.

"Had it not been for Warren McGovern, this Center would never have opened," Dr. Ken Purcell, center director, said. McGovern served as administrator of the Center from its beginning until June 1970 when he became Chief of Clinical Psychology at the clinic.

As its dedication the Center was termed "a beacon in what was a dark and unexplored area of human existence."

Two - Story

Since then the Center has grown from a one - man operation housed in a converted ambulance station on the grounds of Lafayette General Hospital to a two - story structure containing over 3,000 square feet.

The new building, constructed at a cost of $250,000 and opened in November 1961, has become inadequate for the needs of over 300 patients and the Center's staff of approximately 30 professionals, including local psychiatrists, psychologists and a full - time nurse."