

## MOBILE FIELD HOSPITAL NAMED FOR ANTHRAX VICTIM



RICK HARTFORD / THE HARTFORD COURANT

SHIRLEY DAVIS of Woodbury, left, the niece of Otilie W. Lundgren, is embraced by her daughter, Sue Piel, also of Woodbury, after Davis spoke at the dedication of the \$8.25 million Otilie W. Lundgren Memorial Field Hospital at the state Capitol on Wednesday.

# Otilie's Legacy May Save Lives

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Otilie Lundgren, the Oxford senior citizen who died of anthrax in 2001, could never have imagined the legacy her death would leave behind.

On Wednesday, that legacy was revealed as an \$8.25 million mobile emergency field hospital, named in honor of the 94-year-old whose death stunned the nation and the world.

Funded with a combination of state and federal money, the new state facility, believed to be the first in the United States, can be erected and staffed within hours of an emergency situation, officials said. The 100-bed unit includes intensive care, isolation, ambulatory and triage areas and is outfitted with medical supplies and equipment that can provide immediate emergency/disaster medical care.

"At any given moment, Connecticut could be faced with a disaster that results in an overwhelming number of sick or injured," said Leonard Guercia, operations branch chief for the Department of Public Health. He called the Otilie W. Lundgren Memorial Field Hospital a "powerful new tool in the public health emergency preparedness arsenal."

"Hopefully, we will never have to use it," he added. "But if there is ever the need, we are ready."

More than 100 people attended the ceremonies held inside the portion of the 140-by-250-foot facility that was erected on the front lawn of the Capitol. Among those in attendance were Lundgren's family, including her niece, Shirley Davis, of Woodbury.

"My aunt would be flabbergasted to think that the state would name something like this after her," said Davis, who was Lundgren's caregiver and closest relative. "She would be proud, so proud," Davis said about the quiet but sociable woman who was well-liked and well-known in the community.

Lundgren, a Connecticut native, was one of five people in the country to die after anthrax exposure in

November 2001. It is believed she died after opening anthrax-contaminated mail that was delivered to her home. It was never determined who was responsible for her death, which thrust the small community into the media spotlight.

Davis said she was shocked when state health department officials contacted her about naming the mobile hospital after her aunt.

"I could just hear my aunt saying 'They are doing this for little old me?'" said Davis, who wiped away tears during the dedication ceremony. "She just wasn't a woman who was used to being in the spotlight."

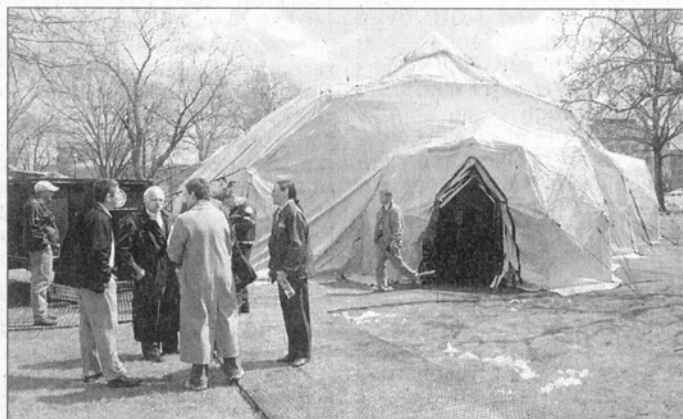
State officials said there was little discussion about whom to name the hospital after, and they emphasized that the circumstances surrounding Lundgren's death demanded that such an honor be bestowed upon her.

"Otilie Lundgren represents us all," said Dr. J. Robert Galvin, commissioner of the state Department of Public Health. "She lived a quiet life in rural Connecticut — far from where terror is supposed to strike," he said. "Her untimely death proved that terrorism knows no bounds and that our state plays an important part in responding to such incidents," he continued. "Naming this hospital in her honor allows us to forever member Mrs. Lundgren's long life and remain cognizant that her untimely death led to the state's ability to better protect its residents."

Officials said the portable field hospital, which has electricity, heat, air conditioning, fresh water, showers and bath-

rooms, can be broken down into 25-bed units and could also be used for regional emergencies. The facility, which will be stored in Windsor Locks when not in use, would be staffed with a combination of personnel from the Connecticut Disaster Emergency Management Team, state government agencies and the state's 31 acute care hospitals.

As part of the program, Gov. M. Jodi Rell also issued a resolution proclaiming Wednesday as "Otilie Lundgren Day."



A SECTION of the Otilie W. Lundgren Memorial Field Hospital is set up on the south lawn of the state Capitol Wednesday.