



Tuesday, April 9, 2002

Ground to be broken on parking structure

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

A special groundbreaking ceremony for a new parking structure will be part of this year's **Founders' Day** celebration Wednesday, April 17. Ceremonies are open to the public and begin at 3 p.m. at the Recreation Center Patio overlooking the lower playing fields.

The three-level structure, to be located adjacent to the lower playing fields on Pioneer Drive across from the new School of Education and Human Services (SEHS) building, will provide about 550 spaces and feature a brick veneer exterior similar in color to other campus buildings and include glass-enclosed stairways at three corners as well as an elevator. J.M. Olson Corporation of St. Clair Shores, the same firm constructing the new SEHS building, will build the parking structure, which is expected to open by the end of October.

"Construction will begin any day now," said Rusty Postlewait, associate vice president for facilities management. "The firm is just waiting to receive their soil erosion permit from the county. The permit details how they will control sediment runoff during the construction process. We're fortunate to be working again with Olson on this project. They're cooperative and do very good work, and we enjoy working with them."

Postlewait added that there are no planned closures of that section of Pioneer Drive during the construction period.

The need for parking on the OU campus has increased significantly over the past few years as the university has grown. Enrollment increased by 4.2 percent in the fall 2001 semester and 3.2 percent in the winter 2002 semester as compared to the previous year. As enrollment climbed to an all-time high of nearly 16,000 students last fall, the demand for parking became acute. At the beginning of the fall 2001 semester, OU police established temporary lots in two locations on campus to accommodate about 400 cars.

To ease the parking burden, a new overflow lot with about 170 spaces opened at the beginning of the winter 2002 semester. This month, the **OU Board of Trustees** approved the repaving and expansion of Parking Lot 11, located at the upper playing fields across from the George T. Matthews Apartments.

"With the new structure, the new overflow lot and the expansion of P-11, we will have added over 800 parking spaces to the campus," Postlewait said. "There shouldn't be a case where there's a shortage of parking spaces. When the new structure opens, people may still have to walk to get to their destination. But the addition of these spaces will certainly help, particularly those people at the SEHS building, Varner Hall, Elliott Hall and the Recreation Center."

To celebrate the groundbreaking, the names of eight students, one for each month of the fall and winter semesters beginning in September, will be drawn at the groundbreaking ceremony to receive a **designated parking space** on campus for a specific month. The designated spot will be located in Parking Lot 1 in front of North and South Foundation Halls. Students must be present at the drawing to win and must bring their student ID.

Hosted by the Office of the President, **Founders' Day** honors the memory of benefactors Alfred and Matilda Dodge Wilson, who donated 1,500 acres and \$2 million to establish the university.

SUMMARY

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Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Tuesday, April 9, 2002
Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Tuesday, April 9, 2002
Article Start Date: Monday, November 10, 2003