



Thursday, April 18, 2002

## Ground broken for new parking structure

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

After months of anticipation, Oakland University broke ground April 17 for a new parking structure on campus. The groundbreaking ceremony was one of the highlights of the sixth annual Founders' Day, on which OU celebrates its growth and accomplishments over the past year and commemorates its history.

The structure, located adjacent to the lower playing fields across from the new School of Education and Human Services Building, will provide about 550 spaces and ease the campus parking crunch when it opens in October.

"This project has been anticipated by just about everyone who has ever had business on campus," OU President Gary Russi said during the ceremony, which was held at the Recreation and Athletics Center. "As Oakland University continues to grow, we look to the future and to the vision we have set for 2010. That vision includes growth to 20,000 students in eight years. We will not waver in our commitment to provide the very best in services to each and every student as they pursue their educational goals. With their busy schedules, we know how important our roads, parking, access to buildings and so many other aspects of an expanding infrastructure are to our students."

A parade of cars representing OU's historical association with the automobile and the annual Concours d'Elegance at Meadow Brook Hall made their way to the construction site, followed by a back hoe to ceremonially break ground for the structure. The procession, led by an OU Police Department cruiser, included a 1958 Ford Fairlane 500 Skyliner, a 1964 Ford Galaxy 500, a 1966 Ford Mustang convertible GT, a 1970 Challenger TA and a 2002 Dodge Viper GTS ACR.

In addition to the groundbreaking, eight students who were present received a designated parking space on campus for one month each beginning in September. The designated spot will be located in Parking Lot 1 in front of North and South Foundation Halls.

"I think the groundbreaking is very exciting," said junior Rhonda Hanna, an English and philosophy major who was awarded a parking spot. "It's a great way to continue the expansion of Oakland University and become more nationally known, which is something I think we can achieve very soon. It's great to know that there will be somewhere to park without having to search for a spot."

Though he is graduating in a few weeks, OU Student Body President Derek Dickow said he also eagerly anticipates the opening of the structure.

"This structure serves as an affirmation that Oakland is resolute in its commitment to improving the infrastructure on campus," Dickow said. "It proves that Oakland is growing annually and becoming more recognized in our state and across the nation. It proves that more students are attending Oakland as their first-choice institution because of our cutting-edge technology, commitment in developing leaders of the next generation and our ability to recognize students' needs. It also proves we are able to facilitate our needs and address issues as they appear before us."

Other Founders' Day events included the dedication of the Varner Memorial Garden and sculpture, the Varner Seminar Series on University Vitality, and the Graduate Admissions Office dedication and open house.

### **Varner Memorial Garden and Sculpture Dedication**

The courtyard garden serves as a remembrance of Woody Varner, who was as OU's first chancellor from 1959-70, and reflects his lifelong interest in agriculture and gardening and the university's commitment to the arts through educational and professional programming.

"I think my father would be very proud of what's happening at Oakland University as well as with the dedication of the garden," said Tom Varner, son of Woody Varner, who attended the ceremonies with his wife and son. "Gardening was a lifelong interest of his. In fact, he's buried in his gardening clothes. He was born on a farm in west Texas and picked cotton as a young boy. I'm sure that wasn't a passion for him then, but late in his life he continued to maintain a garden at his sister's house. He liked to see things grow, including the university."

Ann Arbor-based artist Sharon Que created the sculpture, entitled "Resound." Que has exhibited her artwork in the Detroit area over the past 17 years and is represented locally by Lemberg Gallery in Ferndale.

"I would like to think of 'Resound' as representing an ongoing communication," Que said. "Communication in education and a balanced dialogue between man and nature, one flowing into the other without one claiming power. Communication which aids in a transformation — a subject every educator is involved with. The result of what goes in is not a replication of what comes out."

A 1/7th scale model of "Resound" was unveiled for the ceremony. The permanent sculpture will be placed when construction of the garden is completed in August.

### **Varner Seminar Series on University Vitality**

The inaugural Varner Seminar Series on University Vitality followed the garden and sculpture dedication. The seminar series was created to establish a lasting legacy in Woody Varner's name.

This year's seminar topic was "The Creative Process and the Arts," and included the presentation of the first Varner Arts Award to Neeme Jarvi, music director of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. OU founder Matilda Wilson and Woody Varner each played a large role in the founding of the **Meadow Brook Music Festival**, which serves as the summer home of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

### **Graduate Admissions Office Dedication/Open House**

The ceremonial opening of the Graduate Admissions Office at 160 North Foundation Hall represents further renovation of North Foundation Hall as a one-stop shop for student services. The office houses both Graduate Admissions and Graduate Student Services, which are functions of **Research** and **Graduate Study**.

"This has been a much-anticipated expansion of our office," said Randy Hansen, vice provost for research and graduate study. "The space and location were needed not only for the university's graduate students but benefits the faculty and staff as well. We are happy to be in a more accessible location where the traffic of both undergraduate and graduate students is heavy and where the graduate office is more visible so it becomes a well-known destination for prospective and current students."

Other student services in North Foundation Hall include Undergraduate Admissions, Disability Support Services, New Student Programs, Office of Equity, International Students and Scholars Office, Cashier's Office and Financial Aid Accounting. All of these offices allow students to conduct university business under one roof.

"On this special occasion, I am glad to be a part of OU history," said Kim Shepherd, a graduate student pursuing a Ph.D. in education and ceremony participant. "This Office of Graduate Admissions and Student Services will certainly make my life easier. By caring enough to strive for quality service Oakland University will indeed have students pursuing an advanced degree breathing a sigh of relief."

Founders' Day commemorates the formation of Oakland University in 1957, when Alfred and Matilda Dodge Wilson donated \$2 million and the 1,500-acre Meadow Brook estate to start a new college in Oakland County. The first classes, at what was then named Michigan State University Oakland, were held in 1959.

#### **SUMMARY**

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