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Cornerstone Ceremony to Mark Construction of New Center

Winthrop University

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Cornerstone Ceremony to Mark Construction of New Center

Quick Facts

- The Lois Rhame West Health, Physical Education and Wellness Center is a \$24.9 million building that will house Winthrop's health, physical education and sport management academic programs, as well as wellness facilities.
- Lois West, a Winthrop alum, will be on hand to assist in the unveiling of a cornerstone that was fashioned from marble original to Peabody Gymnasium, the building the West Center eventually will replace.

ROCK HILL, S.C. - **Winthrop University** today will unveil the cornerstone for its newest – and largest – facility on its main campus at ceremonies honoring the former S.C. first lady for whom the building is being named.

The **Lois Rhame West Health, Physical Education and Wellness Center** is a \$24.9 million building that will house Winthrop's health, physical education and sport management academic programs, as well as wellness facilities.

West, a Winthrop alum, will be on hand to assist in the unveiling of a cornerstone that was fashioned from marble original to **Peabody Gymnasium**, the building the West Center eventually will replace.

The ceremony, like the new building itself, will honor the public service legacy of West, who graduated from Winthrop in 1943 with a bachelor of science degree in physical education. A year before she graduated, she married **John West**, who would serve as governor of South Carolina from 1971-1975. Most recently, she served as co-chair of Winthrop's first-ever capital campaign, "**A Lasting Achievement: The Campaign for Winthrop.**"

"I am honored and humbled for Winthrop's newest building to bear my name. I hope this environmentally friendly center will bring out the best in everyone, just as the Winthrop experience has always brought out the best in all of its graduates," West said.

President Anthony DiGiorgio said Winthrop is honoring West because of her lifelong commitment to community service: "Lois is one of those ladies whose generation gave birth to the Baby Boom. They took responsibility for seeing to it that schools and hospitals were built and helped pump vitality into the charitable and arts organizations that create a sense of community among people ... and they did it well because of what they learned here at Winthrop and the kind of people they became – at least in part – because of the time they spent here."

Work on the **West Center** was begun in January by **DeVere Construction Company**. It will be the first academic building in Winthrop's history to be built primarily with student fees, at the request of the Council of Student Leaders. Students in 2003 met with legislators, who confirmed the unlikelihood of soon being able to add to the \$6.4 million in available state bond funds to start the project, so they requested that Winthrop trustees adopt student fees for that purpose. The building is being constructed on the western perimeter of Winthrop's main campus, making it the latest investment in Rock Hill's rehabilitation of an area known as the Textile Corridor.

Rich Fowler, who chairs the **Winthrop Council of Student Leaders**, said all students have an interest in the project because of its wellness facilities components.

"We know this can't be the answer to every academic building need at Winthrop forevermore," Fowler said. "We wouldn't want it to be, and as you can imagine, neither would our families. In this case,

though, we know for sure Winthrop will be better for our having been here."

The donated marble cornerstone used for today's ceremony was salvaged from a renovation of Peabody by **Board of Trustees member Polly Ford**, a 1948 Winthrop graduate who was longtime chair of the Department of Physical Education.

On the cornerstone is inscribed a 1903 quote from founding President D.B. Johnson:

"The great aim of our living and striving should be to become better men and women in heart and soul as well as in mind and body."

As the home of the **Health and Physical Education Department**, the center will offer specialized classrooms as well as wellness facilities, including a running track, cardio stations, weight room, an eight-lane swimming pool, racquetball and basketball courts, and offices.

The **West Center** will be complete in 2006. Once classes can take place there, the Peabody Gym building, which dates back to 1915, will be razed. The gymnasias inside the West Center will still carry the Peabody name, however.

Links to More Information

The **West Center** has been in the works for several years. Visit the **Winthrop Web site** to read the resolution where the **Board of Trustees** voted to name it after Lois Rhame West:

<http://www.winthrop.edu/trustees/default.aspx?id=2718>.

Want to learn more about **Lois Rhame West**? Read the West family history at

<http://library.sc.edu/scpc/exhibits/westexh/family.html>.

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