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Groundbreaking for Buller Hall Marks Winds of Change

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Kathleen Mitchell

The 27 members of the groundbreaking shovel brigade formally break ground for the new Buller Hall.

Groundbreaking for Buller Hall marks winds of change

The winds of change were blowing as the groundbreaking ceremony for Buller Hall commenced Friday morning, Apr. 30, in the heart of the Andrews University campus. Nearly 250 gathered just outside Griggs Hall as University administration, lead donors Allan and Mickey Buller, and faculty formally turned the first shovels of dirt for the new Undergraduate Learning Center.

Against a backdrop of construction equipment poised to bring down Griggs Hall and the sounds of a brass quintet, Niels-Erik Andreasen, University president, welcomed all in attendance to this historic occasion, including special guests Sir Patrick Allen, governor-general of Jamaica; the governor-general's wife, Lady Allen; and Peter N.R. Ogego, Kenyan ambassador to the United States. After sharing a bit of the project's 16-year history, Andreasen said, "We want to create a teaching and learning home where students and teachers have daily meetings of minds that inform, inspire and support the finest ideas the Seventh-day Adventist Church has developed since the first Adventist university—Andrews University—was established in 1874."

Following a word of prayer from

Keith Mattingly, dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, interim provost Bill Richardson gave a historical perspective of Griggs Hall, a building Richardson taught in for 21 years. As a former member of the Department of Religion & Biblical Languages faculty, Richardson recalled the many times he had to wait for the crowd to thin a bit before he could navigate the glutted hallways of Griggs back to his office from the classroom.

Paul Stokstad, co-chair of the President's Council, offered a perspective on the Undergraduate Learning Center building project, paying special tribute to its lead donors, Allan and Mickey Buller. "Allan was just the type of person for whom to name a building: an undergraduate degree from Andrews, president of the student body and president of his senior class. He is a member of what today we call 'the greatest generation.' Allan traded his graduation gown for an armed services uniform the day he graduated," said Stokstad. He then recounted how the Bullers were content to put the project on hold time and again, allowing other worthy and needed projects to become a reality at Andrews University. Then came the day in 2009 when the President's Council reiterated the obvious: With a growing undergraduate enrollment, Andrews needed Buller Hall. "Yes, the economy was at its lowest, but so were interest rates and building costs," recalled Stokstad. "At the close

of one of the meetings, one member said, 'Let's borrow and let's build.'... And here we are today: ready to build."

Ending the program portion of the groundbreaking, Allan Buller said a few words of thanks to all who supported this project. "It has been said that anticipation is greater than realization. If that's true, we've had plenty of time to anticipate. But Dr. Andreasen, you're right; this delay has enabled us to think bigger and plan bigger."

David Faehner, vice president for University Advancement, introduced the 27 members of the groundbreaking shovel brigade, each one with a Buller Hall hardhat and a shovel in hand. The shovel brigade included members of administration, Allan and Mickey Buller, faculty from the College of Arts & Sciences, and representatives from the architecture and construction companies on the project.

Demolition of Griggs Hall began on Friday, May 7. The construction of Buller Hall is scheduled for completion in May 2011. At that time renovation of Nethery Hall will begin, and it is scheduled for completion in August 2011.

Keri Suarez, media relations specialist,
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Martin Lee

University president Niels-Erik Andreasen (center) stands with Allan and Mickey Buller in front of Griggs Hall.