

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**Purdue to dedicate Unfinished Block P sculpture**

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. - The Block P, a Purdue icon that has been part of the university tradition for more than 100 years, will now become a permanent campus fixture as a sculpture designed to symbolize the importance of lifelong learning and self-improvement.

The dedication on Saturday (Oct. 25) in Academy Park, north of Stewart Center, is one of several events taking place during Homecoming week on Oct. 20-25.

"The Block P sculpture will serve as a reminder that even after you've left Purdue, the educational experience is never complete," said President France A. Córdova. "All students become lifelong Boilermakers and lifelong learners and should strive to always continue to learn and grow throughout their lives."

The 8-foot tall bronze sculpture is a likeness of Purdue's iconic Block P, but only partially finished. The Block P, a trademark of the Purdue "All-American" Marching Band, made its first appearance on the football field in 1907.

According to legend, Paul Spotts Emrick, the band's first director, came up with the idea to form a letter on the football field after he saw a flock of geese flying by in a V formation. It is believed to be the first time a marching band formed a letter on the field.

The sculptors, Rick and Rita Hadley from Moments in Bronze in Otterbein, Ind., cast the Unfinished Block P statue to appear as if it were carved out of stone.

The design was a collaborative effort among the Hadleys, Purdue officials and members of Iron Key, a senior honorary organization of students that works anonymously each year on a service project that will benefit Purdue, said Col. Michael Silver, one of the 2008 Iron Key advisers and commander of the Purdue Air Force ROTC.

As the Hadleys began to create a clay model of the Block P, which was funded by the June and Charles Bertsch Foundation in Warsaw, Ind., Iron Key members set to work on campus getting the necessary approval and raising money for the project.

Two major donors helped finance the Unfinished Block P, one of whom was the late Rex Sebastian, a 1951 Purdue graduate from Dallas; the other donor wished to remain anonymous. While a student at Purdue, Sebastian was active on campus and was a four-year letterman on the football team, a member of Iron Key, president of the P-Men Varsity Letterman's Club, president of the

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Inter-Fraternity President's Council and president of Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity, and a member of the Delta Rho Kappa science scholastic honorary.

Following graduation, Sebastian was a life member of the President's Council and Purdue Alumni Association, headed the Plan for the Eighties fundraising campaign in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and received the distinguished alumni award from the Indiana Alpha chapter of Sigma Phi Epsilon. Sebastian, who died in August, will be represented by a family member at the dedication.

Other donors, including many student organizations and individuals, also helped fund the overall sculpture project. A limited edition of bronze replicas will be made available for sale in the near future. Funds generated from sales will be placed into an endowment that will maintain the monument and allow purchase of smaller versions of the replica to be given to families honored at Golden Taps, a ceremony held annually to remember students who died during the academic year. Once dedicated and in place, the sculpture will become the location of the annual Golden Taps ceremony.

"The collaborative effort of the 2008 Iron Key class with Purdue administrators, alumni, students and Hadleys is an amazing example of the sculpture's vision statement - 'that the Purdue experience is just the beginning' - because I know that everyone involved with this project learned something and experienced personal growth," Silver said.

The 9 a.m. dedication ceremony is invitation only.

Writer: Christy Jones, (765) 494-1089, [christyjones@purdue.edu](mailto:christyjones@purdue.edu)

Source: Col. Michael Silver, (765) 494-2042, [masilver@purdue.edu](mailto:masilver@purdue.edu)

**Related Web sites:**

Interactive Block P site: <http://www.purdue.edu/news/blockp>

Block P Project: <http://www.purdueblockp.com/>

**CUTLINE:**

Rick Hadley checks to make sure that everything is properly aligned as he constructs the base of the sculpture. (Purdue News Service photo/Andrew Hancock)

*A publication-quality photo of the Unfinished Block P sculpture in progress is available at <http://news.uns.purdue.edu/images/+2008/blockp019.jpg>*