



NEWS RELEASE

Topeka philanthropist commits \$1 million to Washburn recital hall project Oct. 1, 2014

TOPEKA - The Washburn University Foundation announced today that James Van Sickle, a long-time Topeka philanthropist, has made a gift commitment of \$1 million to support a new recital hall on the Washburn campus.

Van Sickle, who has served on the Topeka Symphony Orchestra Board of Directors since 1988 and on the Washburn University Foundation Board of Trustees since 2000, has seen a growing need for a smaller performing arts venue with a full-size stage and outstanding acoustics for several years.

"Music is such an important part of Topeka and the surrounding communities, and there simply aren't enough venues for practices and performances," Van Sickle said. "A new recital hall will provide a more intimate setting for performances with smaller audiences. It is a venue that will benefit the Washburn music department as well as community groups like the Topeka Symphony Orchestra, Topeka Festival Singers and the Sunflower Music Festival."

"We are so grateful to Jim for his incredible gift and for his vision and leadership in getting this project started," JuliAnn Mazachek, president, Washburn University Foundation, said. "This has been a dream of Jim's – and of the music department – for a long time. Now, with this lead gift, we can begin the planning process to make this dream a reality."

"I am really excited that this project is getting off the ground," Van Sickle said. "It's something I've dreamed about for a very long time. Washburn is such an important part of Topeka. This will be a wonderful addition to the campus and to Topeka. "

Van Sickle's love of music began when his elementary music teacher gave him a clarinet to play in the school band. Through the years, he played at Ottawa University, in the University of Kansas band and the Corpus Christi Navy Band.

"Jim has been an advocate of a recital hall for a long time," Jerry Farley, president, Washburn University said. "His gift is the impetus that will move this project forward. The first step is to hire an architectural firm to look at design concepts and an estimated budget for the project."

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For more information, contact Kathy Busch, director of communications, Washburn University Foundation, 785.670.1846 or kbusch@wufoundation.org.