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Construction on \$6.5 Million Shirk Center Addition to Begin Soon

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — A major gift from the Shirk family and the Shirk Family Foundation will be used to expand fitness and athletic team space in the Shirk Center for Athletics and Recreation on the Illinois Wesleyan campus. This \$6.5 million project was announced at the University's Board of Trustees meeting on Friday, May 14.

Ground will be broken on the two-story addition to the building's east side, over the summer. The expansion will double the size of existing fitness facilities, provide multipurpose rooms for athletic and recreational use, add locker rooms for athletic teams, and address other important needs related to athletic training and equipment storage.



Artist's rendering of the expansion to the Shirk Center

“While the Shirk Center has served both the University and the Central Illinois community well since it opened in 1994, the number of student athletes has nearly doubled during that period and campus interest in personal fitness has skyrocketed,” said Illinois Wesleyan President Richard F. Wilson. “There is no question in my mind that the athletic and recreational facilities at Illinois Wesleyan rank among the best in the country among Division III schools, and this addition will only enhance that reputation.”

In commenting on the project, Jim Shirk said that “those responsible for planning the Shirk Center had been farsighted in both responding to and anticipating athletic and recreational needs and that the new addition would continue that tradition.”

Athletic Director Dennie Bridges added, “We are enormously grateful to the Shirk family for the sustained commitment they have made to athletics and recreation at the University over the last 20 years. This most recent commitment will enable us to address growing needs well into the future.”

The \$15 million Shirk Center, which hosts more than 300 community events annually and has been the site for six NCAA Division III national championship tournaments, was completed in 1994 with generous support from the Russell and Betty Shirk Foundation. The Shirk family owns Beer Nuts, Inc.®, the Bloomington-based snack food company.

The two-level, 135,344-square foot complex seats 2,680 for sporting events in its performance arena, and contains a 200-meter track, a practice gym, four multi-use courts for tennis, volleyball, basketball, and other sports, as well as racquetball courts, a fitness center, athletics training room, team locker rooms, wellness center, classrooms, and athletic department offices.

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