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Ceremony Marks Opening of NPHC Plaza at SEMO

AUGUST 20TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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A ceremony Aug. 16 marked the opening of a new National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) Plaza at Southeast Missouri State University.

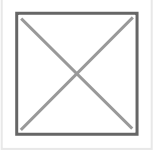
The Plaza, located on the north end of Parker Field, recognizes Southeast's eight historically African-American fraternities and sororities, including Alpha Phi Alpha, Iota Phi Theta, Omega Psi Phi and Phi Beta Sigma fraternities and Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, Sigma Gamma Rho and Zeta Phi Beta sororities.

The NPHC Plaza provides Southeast's NPHC chapters with a voice and more prominent presence on campus, while also providing a greenspace for student recreation and events, said Dr. Carlos Vargas, Southeast president.

The plaza design features markers with information about each of the eight NPHC chapters recognized at Southeast, highlighting the work of NPHC students and alumni on the Southeast campus. The black Greek-Letter organizations are known as The Divine Nine, or D9, referencing the first nine fraternities and sororities founded between 1906 and 1963 for African American men and women. The Plaza showcases eight of the Divine 9 organizations recognized at Southeast. These organizations were originally created to unite African-American students with common core ideas and principles.

"We are very proud of our NPHC chapters and the contributions they have made not only to this campus, but also to this community through their public service," Vargas said. "It is only fitting that today we recognize those contributions through the grand opening of this beautiful plaza which will, for years to come, serve as a gathering area for our future

students.”



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[http://1mxixh1xnqe1d55pkpkf9i1b.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-](http://1mxixh1xnqe1d55pkpkf9i1b.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/NPHC-Plaza-Cox-600x400.jpg)

[content/uploads/2018/08/NPHC-Plaza-Cox-600x400.jpg](http://1mxixh1xnqe1d55pkpkf9i1b.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/NPHC-Plaza-Cox-600x400.jpg) 600w" sizes="(max-width: 300px) 100vw, 300px" width="300" height="200" />Vargas congratulated members of NPHC who were instrumental from the first steps of the project through to completion.

“The design of the Plaza was developed from the requests of students in Southeast’s NPHC organizations. They shared with the University examples of plots and gardens at other colleges and universities that highlighted the presence of NPHC organizations on those campuses,” Vargas said.

Dr. Bruce Skinner, associate vice president for student life, said the NPHC Plaza would not have been possible without the leadership and vision of Andrea Cox, Southeast alumna and past NPHC president.

“Every accomplishment starts with a decision,” said Cox, who highlighted the importance of the initial decision made to recognize Southeast’s NPHC chapters at Southeast.

“We finally have accomplished what we worked so hard for,” she said. “NPHC members have a place to call home,” and alumni can now return to the campus to reminisce about “where it all started.”

Jaleea Hudson-Wilson, current NPHC president, said, when she first arrived as a new student at Southeast, she discovered Southeast’s NPHC organizations had little representation on campus. She said the new plaza will be useful for new member presentations, Greek Stroll Off and chapter showcases. She said the plaza will serve as a platform to grow new members, host alumni events and build better connections to all-Greek councils.

Vargas credited the firms responsible for making the NPHC Plaza vision a reality. SWT Design of St. Louis, a landscape architecture firm, developed the design. Nip Kelley Equipment Company of Cape Girardeau served as general contractor. KT Power Systems of Cape Girardeau provided electrical work, and Kiefner Brothers, Inc., of Cape

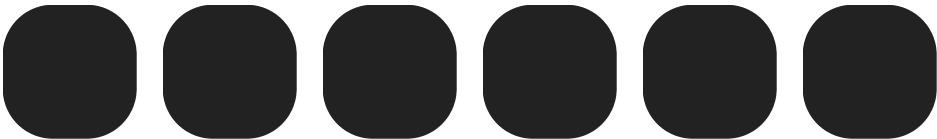
Girardeau completed the concrete work. Engraphix Architectural Signage, Inc., of St. Louis provided the signage and plaques. Southeast’s Facilities Management coordinated the design development and bidding of the project and managed the construction. In addition, Facilities Management grounds crews installed an irrigation system, sod and plantings.

An official ribbon-cutting ceremony is planned for 11 a.m. Oct. 13 at part of Southeast’s Homecoming festivities.

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