



Monday, November 17, 2003

For Immediate Release

## **TSU receives \$1 million gift for Administration Building**

Tri-State University President Earl D. Brooks, II, announced this morning that Dr. Clifford W. Sponsel, a 1931 Tri-State civil engineering graduate and trustee emeritus who now lives in Santa Barbara, CA, has contributed \$1 million toward the renovation of Sniff Hall.

The Lilly Endowment of Indianapolis has offered to match virtually all gifts to Indiana universities and colleges through Dec. 31, 2003. The program is called the *Special Initiative to Strengthen Philanthropy for Indiana Higher Education Institutions*. Thanks to this special initiative, Sponsel's gift to Tri-State becomes \$2 million.

"Like many of our graduates from before World War II, Dr. Sponsel has a strong attachment to the (Sniff) administration building," said Brooks. "It will be a real joy to see this historical building once again be a functional part of campus."

In honor of the gift, the building will house the Sponsel Administration Center.



**Dr. Cliff Sponsel**

Sponsel was born in upstate New York on a fruit farm. His father was an early enthusiast of mechanized equipment. As a result, Cliff learned to drive at age 5. This early influence is still evident in his hobby—collecting and restoring antique automobiles.

Sponsel spent his career as an aeronautical engineer. He started as a project engineer for General Motors Corp., then moved onto high level positions with Glenn Martin Co., Bell Aircraft Corp., and Ryan Aeronautics Corp. He was subsequently an owner and CEO of Western Design & Manufacturing, and later, Spectral Dynamics.

Throughout the years, Sponsel generously supported Tri-State. He served on the TSU Board of Trustees from 1978 to 1999. During the mid 1990s renovation of Fawick Hall, which turned the building into one of the finest small college engineering facilities in the Midwest, Sponsel provided funding to construct the central entrance, including an elevator that brings the building into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The University has honored Sponsel's support in several ways. In 1977, he was presented with a Distinguished Service Award. In 1985, Tri-State conferred on him the honorary degree Doctor of

Engineering. In 1996, in recognition of his Fawick contribution, the school named the building's main entrance Sponsel Tower.

Built in 1887, just three years after the beginning of the school, Sniff Hall has provided space for classrooms, laboratories, a library, a theater and offices. Its name recognizes Tri-State's second president and the man largely credited with the school's early survival, Littleton M. Sniff. (Sniff served two terms as president, from 1885-1909 and 1910-1922.)

Sponsel's gift will be used to begin renovation of the building. One aspect of the plan is to recreate a north entrance, which would face the campus's main drive, University Avenue.

Once the building is completely renovated, administration and institutional advancement offices now housed in Shambaugh Hall will once again return to the Sponsel Administration Center. The renovation will also include additional classroom space.

This fall, Tri-State welcomed its largest freshman class in recent years and the University has been aggressively adding programs, including its first ever graduate program, the Master of Science in Engineering Technology.

"The renovation of this building is another step in Tri-State's master plan," said Brooks. "This will create an inviting, aesthetically pleasing entrance to campus, plus provide space that we'll need for a growing student body and program offerings. Dr. Sponsel has always been a person who looks forward, and we're very thankful he shares our vision of the future for Tri-State."

Tri-State University is an independent, co-educational institution offering associate, baccalaureate and master degrees in over 40 programs to students in engineering, mathematics, science, computer science, business administration, teacher education, communications, criminal justice and social sciences. Founded in 1884, Tri-State today operates a 485-acre main campus in Angola, IN, with off-campus centers in Fort Wayne, South Bend and Merrillville, IN.



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Friday, October 31, 2003

For Immediate Release

## **TSU receives final approval for housing project**

At a meeting of the Angola Board of Zoning Appeals on Thursday, Tri-State University received final approval for its 2-building housing project at the corner of Prospect and Oakwood streets.

"Bids are already out and are due on Monday (Nov. 3)," said Mike Bock, director of campus operations. "We plan to break ground immediately." The project is scheduled to be completed by the summer of 2004 and ready for occupancy by the start of the 2004-2005 school year.



"This project illustrates how we are able to make fast, dramatic changes at Tri-State University to meet students needs," said Earl D. Brooks, II, Ph.D., president. "We perceived a need for this type of housing—both from what our own students were saying and from watching trends at other universities—then a loyal and generous alum stepped forward to push the project ahead, and, finally, our staff worked really hard to make the plan a reality."

Dr. Ralph Trine, a 1961 mechanical engineering Tri-State graduate and owner of Vestil Manufacturing in Angola, and his wife, Sheri, are the champions of the project. They have been involved with the buildings' design, engineering, furnishing and financing.

Trine sees the project as an important tool for Tri-State in recruiting and retaining students. "Students today expect more than the students of 20 years ago when the other dorms were built," said Trine. "In discussing this project with the students, we heard that the things they want were a quiet environment to study, privacy, their own room with a lock on it, bigger rooms, and a washer and dryer. Upperclassmen certainly need a social center, and with these two buildings, we'll have a nucleus we can build on." Trine said the long term goal is for Tri-State to build three or four additional apartment-style housing projects.

Trine noted that credit should also be given to John and Amy Lelli, owners of The Hatchery, an Angola restaurant, and the Lone Eagle Nursery in Coldwater, MI. The Lellis have pledged to donate plant material for landscaping the property.

According to Bock, the two new townhouse-style buildings will contain five apartments each: two with five bedrooms, two with three bedrooms and one with four bedrooms. Each apartment will have a private

entrance and bathrooms.

This type of setting—much closer to a private community apartment than a University dormitory—fits a trend seen in student housing projects at other higher education institutions. Schools are trying to accommodate older students who often seek housing off campus.

"This clearly meets a need we have for upper classmen," said Jean Deller, Ph.D., vice president for student life. "It's a great alternative for our students and I really appreciate the fact that we have the type of donors who support a project like this."

The lot, which is one block south of Tri-State's main academic buildings, features several mature trees. Bock said all of the trees will remain and, along with additional landscaping, a parking lot will be added.

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Thursday, September 25, 2003

For Immediate Release

## **100-year-old school teacher requests contact with former students**

A former teacher in the one-room Shipe School located near Ashley-Hudson is looking to make contact with her former students.

Agnes (Miller) Kopp turns 100 years old on Friday, Oct. 3. In celebration, her family is holding a large party at the Woldumar Nature Center in Kopp's current hometown, Lansing, MI.

"Could you tell all of my former students to come?" said Kopp last week. "I'd like to see them again."

Kopp grew up on a farm near Ashley. She taught at the Shipe School from 1924-1925. In 1925, she received her teaching certificate from Tri-State College.

Asked for her memories of what is now Tri-State University, Kopp waved a hand. "Oh, it was so long ago!" she said. But she recalled driving her cousin's Buick 12 miles from Ashley to Angola each day, and she remembered Prof. Willis A. Fox. "I used to go to sleep in his class," admitted Kopp, in a tone that suggests she still needs to keep the fact a secret. "But he never said anything about it."



**Agnes Kopp as she appeared during her 5-year teaching career.**



Agnes Kopp models her recent gift from Tri-State University—a sweatshirt.

During one summer, Kopp worked as a waitress at Pokagon State Park's Potawatomi Inn. "We lived in a long building and slept on cots," she recalled. "For dressers, we each had an orange crate." The young men who worked at the park tended the row boats. "At night, the boys would sneak the boats out and we'd take a boat ride," she added.

In 1929, after five years of teaching, Kopp tried to make a career change. She enrolled in a Chicago art school, but her plans suddenly changed when she contracted Scarlet Fever.

"I was staying at the YMCA," Kopp recalled. "A nurse came in and covered me with a sheet—right over my head—so I wouldn't contaminate anyone. Then she walked me down the hall and took me to a hospital. I was quarantined for a month."

When Kopp recovered, she had missed so much schooling, she gave up on her dream. She had a standing offer of marriage from Bill Kopp, a Lansing butcher, so she got on the train. "I came to Lansing on a Sunday and I got married that same day!" she said matter-of-factly.

Kopp became a mother three times, but she still worked occasionally. A voracious learner, she took classes at Michigan State University while employed there. A naturalist from early in her life, Kopp was a talented gardener. She became a charter member of the Woldumar Nature Center when she saw a newspaper article on the new venture and, without any solicitation, sent in \$300. Today, she is the organization's oldest living charter member.

On Tuesday, Sept. 22, a representative of Tri-State University visited Kopp and presented her with two presents: a Tri-State University sweatshirt and throw blanket.

Kopp was thrilled, but struggling with the wrapping paper reminded her of an important fact she wanted made known to any former students who might attend her party next Saturday.

"Tell them no gifts," she said. "Unwrapping them wears me out."

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Searching for Ruth Gehrum  
During an hour-long interview, Agnes Kopp repeatedly asked for information about her college roommate, Ruth Gehrum. Gehrum was originally from Garrett and became a teacher after her graduation from Tri-State College. Kopp realized that her old friend may no longer be living, but she was adamant about finding out what she could.

Anyone with information on Ruth Gehrum is asked to call Tri-State University at (260) 665-4119.

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