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New heritage center honors state's best

Oklahoma Heritage Association

Students from four Oklahoma schools will be invited to a sneak peek of the Edward L. Gaylord-Boone Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Center on May 7. Doors will open to the public May 12.

Source: Oklahoma Heritage Association

Founded in 1927 by Anna B. Korn, the Heritage Association (then named the Oklahoma Memorial Association) honors Oklahomans who have given outstanding service to the state by inducting them into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.

Each year, the association awards more than \$400,000 in scholarships to Oklahoma high school students and sponsors the annual Heritage Week for fourth through 12th-grade students and is involved in publishing Oklahoma history publications.



BY PAUL HELLSTERN, THE OKLAHOMAN

Finishing touches are being done to this room in the Edward L. Gaylord-Boone Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Center. The Oklahoma Heritage Association left its home of 30 years, the Hefner Mansion, and will open the Edward L. Gaylord-Boone Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Center in the former Mid-Continent Life Insurance Building at 1400 Classen Drive in Oklahoma City.



BY PAUL HELLSTERN, THE OKLAHOMAN Bronze busts of people inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame v displayed in the Edward L. Gaylord-Boone Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Center.

Five-year renovation nearly done

By Brian Sargent Staff Writer

Shannon Nance carefully chose her words when talking about the Hefner Mansion, the former home of the Oklahoma Heritage Association.

"It was a great place to tour for field trips, but it was just to let people see what it looked like in that house in 1927," said Nance, president of the Oklahoma Heritage Association.

The heritage association also was running out of room at the Hefner Mansion.

In May, the association plans to debut its multimillion-dollar museum, the Edward L. Gaylord-Boone Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Center. The center will occupy the Mid-Continent Life Insurance Building at 1400 Classen Drive, after being in the Hefner Mansion for 30 years.

Bought from the American Fidelity Insurance Co. in 2001 with a \$3 million gift from Gaylord, the 42,000-square-foot, 80-year-old building has undergone nearly five years of renovations.

Pickens later matched Gaylord's gift. When complete, the heritage center project will have cost \$15 million.

"For the staff and me, we're passionate that generations of Oklahomans will come here and be proud of their heritage," Nance said. "Realize the things we've touched in science. The people that have been the first or the best or the only in any number of fields."

Four stories of history

The heritage center will house exhibits telling Oklahoma's history through the lives and accomplishments of its people. The museum will center around five characteristics — individualism, perseverance, pioneer spirit, optimism and generosity.

The first floor will showcase "Oklahoma Through its People," a high-tech, interactive exhibit celebrating the contributions of 36 Oklahomans.

Visitors may record their childhood memories or chat about their hometowns in "Tell Your Story." A video camera will record the images, and visitors will have the option to email their recording to themselves or others.

The Oklahoma Hall of Fame will be on the third floor. Televisions with touch screens will allow visitors to answer questions and read about 611 Hall of Fame inductees.

Boston-based Northern Light Productions developed the heritage center's innovative and interactive exhibits.

"The cutting-edge hologram technology Northern Lights is developing for us will truly make visitors feel like they are part of the exhibits," Nance said.

Other third-floor rooms include a temporary exhibit gallery and a classroom.

The Great Hall will be used for special events and occupies nearly the entire fourth floor.

Busts and portraits of the Hall of Famers will be displayed throughout the building.