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Mayor



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VBC receives gift to make major renovations to Concert Hall Linda and Mark Smith Family Foundation donates \$3 million

Huntsville, Ala. --- The Von Braun Center's Concert Hall will receive a renovation in honor of a renowned businessman's innovation and love of music. Mrs. Mark C. Smith has offered a gift of \$3 million, from the Linda and Mark Smith Family Foundation, to renovate and update the facility which will be named Mark C. Smith Concert Hall. Mayor Loretta Spencer and the Von Braun Center Board announced the public/private partnership at a press conference outside the hall's entrance.

"The VBC has been an asset for our city," Mayor Spencer commented. "We have been assessing its condition for several years, and I am very grateful for the Smith family's generous contribution to update the Concert Hall. Linda and I were talking and her desire to do something for our community matched the VBC's need to be brought to a new standard."

The Von Braun Center opened in March 1975.

"Today is indeed a historic day in the life of the VBC," Wayne Bonner, VBC Board president said. "This facility that is now over 33 years old, has become more than anyone could have envisioned 33 years ago. It has become the crown jewel of the City of Huntsville, and probably, some would say, the life blood of the city. But as most of you know it is a jewel that needs polishing."

To insure that funds are available for future maintenance, \$2.5 million of the gift will be used for the renovation with the remaining \$500,000 placed in a separate 501-c3 trust.

Mark C. Smith, the founder of Universal Data Systems and Adtran, is widely known for his business expertise and entrepreneurial success in building powerhouse companies. He also had a deep appreciation for the arts. His parents were planted this seed through their involvement with school bands and the Birmingham Symphony. Mr. Smith also had a band during his youth.

"The design of the renovation, if you will, reflects the benefactor." Paul Matheny, principal of Matheny Goldman Architects remarked. "The changes that will be made will bring a fresh energy to the Concert Hall, the VBC and the downtown area as well."

The renovation will transform the hall with; a new glass façade entrance to capitalize on natural lighting, the addition of a center aisle, an enlarged and open lounge area, an additional level with VIP box seats and a lobby overlooking Big Spring Park, as well as more than doubling the restrooms.

"The enhancements will increase the VBC's ability to generate revenue with the pre-function areas and seating for private parties," Mayor Spencer continued. "It will also assist in bringing more entertainment venues to Huntsville."

Construction is planned to be complete late December 2009. The Concert Hall will continue to hold events through construction and be closed only periodically based on construction needs and scheduled events.

"When our family looked at this project we felt it was very appropriate," Mrs. Smith stated. "I think that Mark would be very proud."

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