

CAMPUS NEWS

Groundbreaking Ceremony Begins First Phase of GWU Outdoor Performance Complex

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Construction Begins Soon for the 900-Seat Brinkley Amphitheater on South Main Street

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—The Gardner-Webb University community celebrated the groundbreaking of the Brinkley Amphitheater on Nov. 30. Named in honor of longtime University supporters, David and Marie Brinkley, the 900-seat venue will be a home for performing arts, summer concerts, future Webbstock events, outdoor worship services and public lectures. With support from town, county and state officials, this new venue and outdoor performance complex has the potential to become a destination for visitors beyond the region.

In his remarks at the ceremony, GWU President Dr. William Downs noted, “Today we celebrate the University’s dream and the generosity of David and Marie Brinkley...that combination—that very special combination—makes today possible.”

He continued, “The Brinkley Amphitheater will become a place that enlivens our campus and engages our community. An interactive space where we can all come together, have fun, and make good memories. David and Marie, I thank you on behalf of our students, our faculty and staff, our alumni, and our community.”



- ▲ Gardner-Webb President Dr. William Downs speaks at the groundbreaking event.

Construction of the Brinkley Amphitheater, stage and courtyard is the first phase of GWU's multifaceted plans for the 1.78-acre parcel at 205 South Main Street in Boiling Springs, purchased in January 2021. The former site of a Hardee's restaurant, the property will be transformed into an attractive event venue and serve as an area where students can gather, read or study.

During the second phase of development, Gardner-Webb intends to construct a Main Street-facing building adjoining the performance venue that will house both a campus shop and a nationally recognized eatery open to the public. The outdoor performance complex has also received a \$500K grant (<https://gardner-webb.edu/news/nc-budget-allocates-500k-for-town-partnership/>) from North Carolina's General Assembly in partnership with the Town of Boiling Springs and Cleveland County.

The Brinkleys are residents of Kings Mountain, N.C., and their two daughters, Kristie ('04) and Carrie ('06), graduated from Gardner-Webb as student-athletes. David, who serves on the GWU Board of Trustees, is a former high school football coach, and is retired from the Brinkley Financial Group investment firm.

Guided by their faith and a commitment to help improve the lives of children and young adults, David said he and Marie pledged when they were married to give back a portion of their income as God directs. "Every day when I say my prayers, I ask the Lord to give me opportunities that I can share my blessings," David shared. "On that particular day, we had the trustee meeting and I saw (Dr. Downs') presentation, and it was a little lightbulb that went off for me, and I said this is the one."



▲ David Brinkley shares his enthusiasm for the project at the groundbreaking ceremony.

When he told Marie what he wanted to do, she was immediately on board. “It will provide so many opportunities for Gardner-Webb,” Marie observed, “not only for the students, but it gives so much exposure and a chance for the whole community to become involved in University activities.”

The Brinkleys were familiar with Gardner-Webb after moving into the county in the late 1970s and became more engaged with the University when their daughters attended. After Kristie and Carrie graduated, the couple increased their philanthropic support by giving to academic programs, providing the lead gift for the Brinkley Softball Stadium in 2015, and making the lead donation for the Marching Bulldog Band uniforms in 2020.

The couple also serve the community through other organizations. They have been active members of Central United Methodist Church in Kings Mountain since 1981. David formerly served as chairman of the Finance Committee and Church Endowment Fund, and Marie is president of the Methodist women’s organization, serves on the Administrative Council and is a member of the Handbell choir. They lead the Kings Mountain Touchdown Club, a non-profit sports organization they founded in 2008 for the purpose of promoting high school sports in the Kings Mountain community. David is chairman of the Cheyenne Board of Directors. They also support the Kings Mountain Elite, children’s sports program, and many organizations in Kings Mountain, such as the Museum, Little Theatre, Women’s Club, YMCA, Hospice, Life Enrichment Center, and the Optimist Club, and others.

Bulldog Dialogue Episode 12 with David and Marie Brinkley

The Brinkleys speak with Gardner-Webb President Dr. William Downs about their drive and passion for giving, community service, and why actively living a life through faith fuels their heart’s desires.

For more information about giving opportunities for Gardner-Webb, click [here \(https://gardner-webb.edu/give/\)](https://gardner-webb.edu/give/).

Gardner-Webb University is North Carolina's recognized leader in private, Christian higher education. A Carnegie-Classified Doctoral/Professional University, GWU is home to nine colleges and schools, more than 80 undergraduate and graduate majors, and a world-class faculty. Located on a beautiful 225-acre campus in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb prepares graduates to impact their chosen professions, equips them with the skills to advance the frontiers of knowledge, and inspires them to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of others. Ignite your future at [Gardner-Webb.edu](https://gardner-webb.edu/) (<https://gardner-webb.edu/>).