

Groundbreaking held for “Antoun Nabil Sehnaoui – SGBL Athletics Center” at LAU Byblos

The Lebanese American University (LAU) hosted a ceremonial groundbreaking for “Antoun Nabil Sehnaoui – SGBL Athletics Center” on its campus in Byblos attended by SGBL Chairman Mr. Antoun Sehnaoui and LAU president Dr. Joseph Jabbra amongst the presence of political, economic, military, security, educational, athletic and media dignitaries, LAU executive and administrative officers, faculty and staff, and SGBL senior management.

Also among those participating in the ceremony were MP Antoine Zahra representing Speaker Nabih Berri, MP Ziad al-Qadri representing Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri, MP Nayla Moawad, Brigadier General Awad Najem representing Army Commander General Joseph Aoun, Marine Commander Mazen Saqer representing Director-General of the General Security Major General Abbas Ibrahim, Brigadier General Roland Daou representing Internal Security Forces Major General Imad Othman, Major Rabie Elias representing Director General of State Security General Tony Saliba, Jbeil Qaemaqam Najwa Suwaidan, SGBL’s COO Philippe Dubois, SGBL’s Deputy GM Georges Saghbini, the heads of municipalities of the region and former LAU President Riad Nassar.

The ceremony began with a parade of LAU student-athletes accompanied by a musical performance. Afterwards, LAU sports director Joe Moujaes welcomed the audience noting that the dream is becoming reality today shining the spotlight on LAU name in the sport field locally and internationally.

Shortly after, LAU president Dr. Jabbra delivered the commencement address in which he thanked Mr. Sehnaoui for his continuous support to sports in general, and praised his quick responsiveness to this university project aimed at building a large multipurpose sports facility that will house LAU sporting activities as well the Jbeil community sporting activities. “Mr. Sehnaoui is a great example of solid and smart Lebanese entrepreneurial personality owing to his dynamic innovative and creative character and his broad vision that succeeds continually... most importantly his strong belief in Lebanon and his national feeling are his strengths. He grew up during the civil war, where he gained experience and acquired the necessary skills to turn a negative situation into a positive one, and formed a visionary perspective in banking, tourism, real estate and press investment projects serving Lebanon as a country with all its diversities and components” said Dr. Jabbra. “Hailing from a family successful in business and politics, the distinguished young man fell in love with LAU and its teaching methods and curricula and believed in its capabilities; he has always believed that sport brings the Lebanese together and creates a sense of co-existence and

solidarity. Mr. Sehnaoui also believes in the Latin phrase “Mens sana in corpore sano” which translates into “a healthy mind in a healthy body”, and for all these reasons he decided to support this sports complex which will not only be a sports facility but also a platform for discussion, dialogue and social interaction between young men and women, breaking all the barriers between the Lebanese and broadening their horizons”, he added.

Dr. Jabbra announced that the athletics center will enjoy an 8,500 square meters built-up area, will feature multiple sports facilities, and will be named “Antoun Nabil Sehnaoui-SGBL Athletics Center” as a grateful appreciation of Mr. Sehnaoui’s US\$ 7 million contribution to complete this project.

Before the ceremony, Sehnaoui said that SGBL has always supported sport because it brings together the Lebanese from all religions, and origins. "Sport has the power to create unity, solidarity and coexistence. It is an important and healthy solution to our political and social problems in Lebanon. Sport breaks the isolation imposed by society and breaks all barriers between people" he said. Sehnaoui added that he chose LAU because he believes in the capabilities of Dr. Joseph Jabbra and in LAU capabilities as a leading educational university. He also noted that he chose a university that adopts the American education system that allocates great space and great interest to sport, and because he is a University of California graduate.

It is noteworthy that LAU is one of the universities that pay great attention to sports and grant athletic scholarships to encourage students to do sports. LAU has achieved outstanding results and gained large reputation in individual and collective sports in the universities championships held yearly in Lebanon and abroad.

After his speech, Dr. Jabbra offered to Mr. Sehnaoui an LAU green sports jersey carrying the number 1 and five stars, as a symbol of the five university tournaments won by LAU - Byblos Campus.

Then, football player Khalil Khamis and basketball player Sasha Mattar spoke on behalf of the students expressing their gratitude to Mr. Sehnaoui who will support the construction of this huge athletics center that will be a landmark in the sports field in Lebanon and the Middle East.

“Ambitious and diligent yet modest and generous are what characterize Mr. Antoun Sehnaoui. He founded News Media, took over FIDUS by making it Lebanon’s leading financial investment firm, was appointed chairman of SGBL, along with several other accomplishments all before the age of 40. SGBL group has also been a contributor in many pioneering events and projects such as Beiteddine Festival and Beirut Art Center. This is a heartfelt appreciation and recognition. Appreciation for granting the coming generation of athletes not only a place they can call their own, but also a sense of

support and encouragement to strive for and reach their athletic goals here at LAU. Recognition to all those who are investing in every one of us athletes and future leaders to be able to give back all what has been given to us and raise LAU name. I stand here today with great pride and promise in the name of every student athlete that we will make you proud" said Mattar.

"I'm particularly delighted that our sports facility will bear the name of "Antoun Nabil Sehnaoui, SGBL Athletics Center", quality businessman, who puts God and family above all else and targets his investments to serve all Lebanese youth and Who embraces youth sporting passion, ability, and achievements. Also, we express our great appreciation to our role models Dr. Jabbra, LAU president, and Mr. Joe Moujaes, who both worked hard to create the best possible conditions for the LAU athletes and to help them achieve many victories and raise their flag in internationally. You proved that LAU really cares. Nelson Mandela once said "Sport can change the world". Sports can have a positive influence on development and peace of society since its universal law is based on global ethics, fair play, respect and friendship. Thank you for your belief in youth and their potentials for a better future", said Khamis.

Also, the cheerleaders won the applause of the audience as they presented an artistic athletic performance. Dr. Jabbra and Mr. Sehnaoui then visited the location where the center will be built and laid the foundation stone.