Time Capsule Discovery Reveals Origin of USC Health Services

For decades, Dr. Larry Neinstein and his staff walked by the same concrete cornerstone of the old University Park Health Center without a second thought.

When the center moved to what is now the Engemann Student Health Center in January 2013, Dr. Neinstein, the center’s executive director, brought along the old block etched with the words “Student Health Service 1951.”

On June 12, 2014, after staff members noted that the block did not seem solid, USC Facilities pried open a hidden recess. Inside, they discovered a lead box containing the first known records of student health services at the university that dated before 1951. In fact, for the first time, it was revealed to staff that student health on the USC campus dated back to 1913.

The unearthed time capsule had been buried in 1950. Its carefully preserved contents – a 1950 USC Medical School Bulletin and a 1949-50 USC Student Health Service Report to the President – confirmed that healthcare for students at USC stretched back more than a century.

In fact, unbeknownst to university administrators, the opening of Engemann in 2013 marked the 100th year of health services on campus.

“It was my first time seeing a real, live time capsule,” said Liz Lopez, a medical assistant who witnessed the surprise. “I had only seen them in history books and movies, so I was as excited as a little kid.”

To commemorate the Centennial of health services to USC students and kick off its new five-year strategic initiatives in health and wellness, Engemann Student Health Center, in conjunction with the USC Trojan League, held a celebration of its 100-year history on campus on October 23, 2014.

A new time capsule was revealed at the October celebration and is located in front of the health center. This new capsule is a tribute to both the 1951 opening for the University Park Health Center and the 2013 opening of the Engemann Student Health Center. Old and new contents were just sealed into the time capsule last week, February 6, 2015.

Perhaps this time in 100 years it won’t be forgotten.