

2009 Business Review & Forecast

Sunday, Jan. 25, 2009

They said it:

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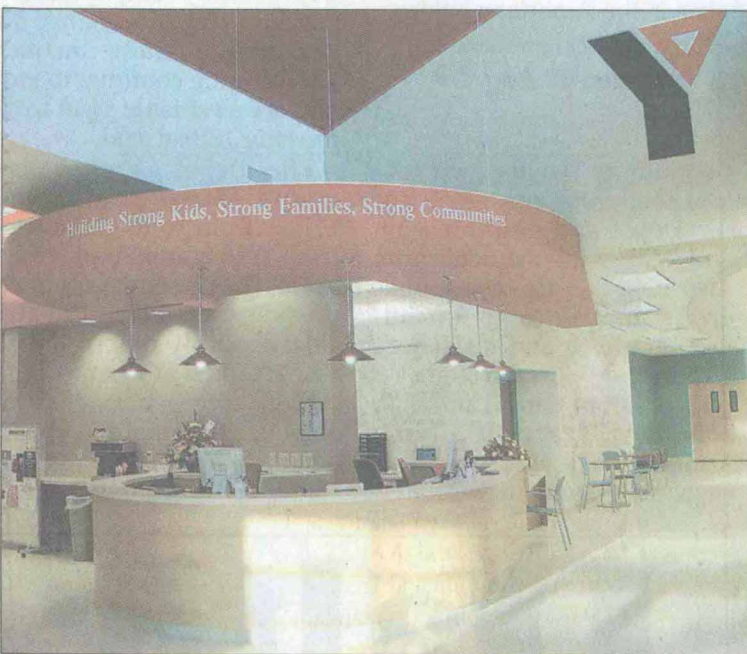
Keith Lands, YMCA executive director.

Here are some of the changes

Photos provided by the Tuscarawas County YMCA



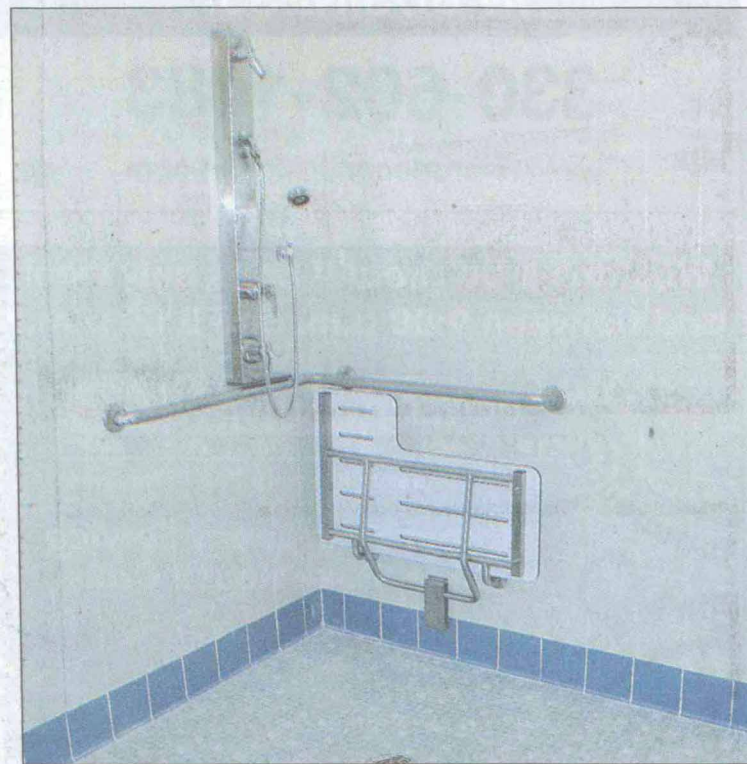
The appearance of the front entrance of the Tuscarawas County YMCA changed with the addition of the multipurpose room.



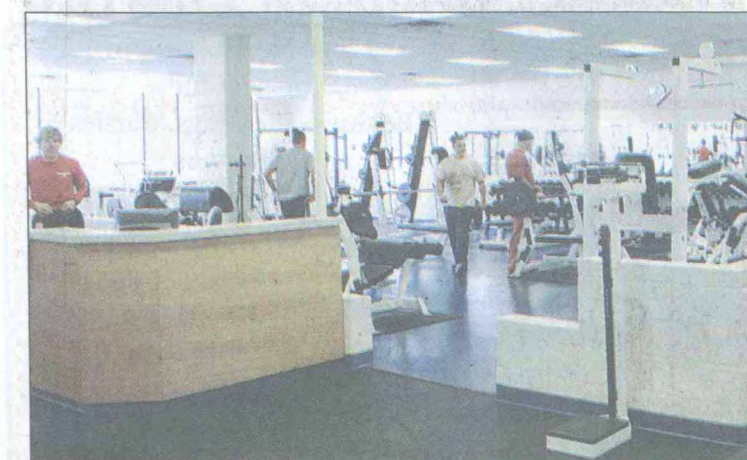
A new service desk greets members and visitors to the newly renovated YMCA.



The improved youth center provides a place for children and teens to play games.



The new family/special needs locker rooms has seating in the showers.



The staff desk in the Wellness Center is beside the free weight area and near the entrance to the room.

EXTREME MAKEOVER

A test of spirit

Tuscarawas County YMCA renovation more than just changes in appearance

By STEPHANIE HARRIS

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Heating equipment breaks down. Old filtering systems become outdated. Things wear out.

That's why in August 2007, after two years of planning, a renovation program began at the Tuscarawas County YMCA at Dover.

"The existing building was constructed in 1970. The board recognized that renovating the facility needed to be a No. 1 priority," said Keith Lands, executive director. "Sixty percent of the work done was stuff people can't see – filtering systems for the pools, more efficient boilers; but the time comes that you have to bite the bullet and improve the infrastructure."

When the building was constructed, the boilers were installed before the large pool, Lands said. "They poured the floor of the pool over the boilers," he added. "We had to knock out a foundation wall to take out the old boilers."

"It was kind of funny," said Kathleen Johnson, marketing and membership director. "People could hear jackhammers but couldn't see anyone."

Cost of the improvements was \$3 million and some inconvenience to YMCA members and staff. Some facilities were closed for a period during the project, and offices were moved to a rented modular structure outside the building.

All five locker rooms – men's, women's, boys', girls' and family/special needs – were closed sometime during the 17-month project. "First, having five locker rooms is unusual. Many YMCA's only have two," Johnson said. "The boys' locker room hadn't had any improvements since the building opened. It was gutted. The special needs locker room was moved so it would be closer to the entrance."

"New lighting was installed; they were retiled, repainted; carpeting, plumbing and fixtures were replaced. We found

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The Strong Kids campaign begins in February. Funds raised help pay YMCA memberships for children and families who can't afford to buy one.

and repaired leaks we didn't even know were there," Lands added.

Johnson said providing locker rooms for everyone while renovations were being done took some planning. Men used the boys' locker room and women the girls' while their areas were remodeled. Then the girls' and special needs locker rooms were closed, and they were shuffled around.

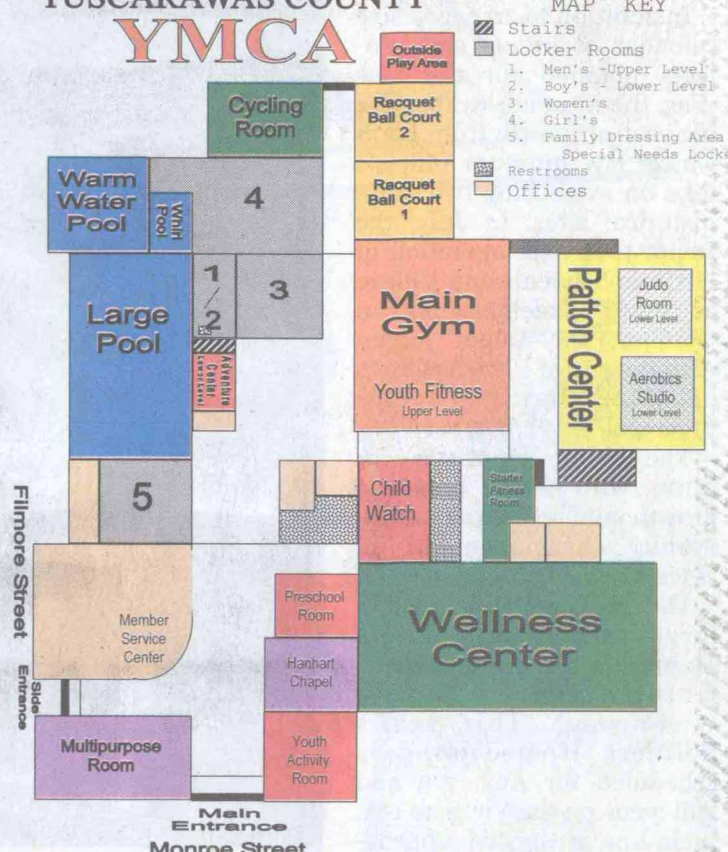
"Trying to keep everyone in sync during improvements was a challenge. The crews worked together perfectly, and they did everything possible to work quickly and provide members with enough time to plan and prepare for changes. We are very proud of the way everything came together," she said.

"We talked about closing the building during the renovations because it would go so much quicker, but we realized that wasn't viable though it would be worth it," Lands said. "We did close for three days over a weekend while electrical work was created."

The county facility has more than 7,000 members and is used by hundreds more every month. "It's tough to get a count," Johnson said. "For Saturday youth basketball, we may have 600 to 700 who come in to watch kids play basketball in one of our leagues. Some Saturdays, it may get to 1,500 to 2,000."

The Tuscarawas County YMCA works with more than 50 collaborative groups. "For example, Stacy Harlan, aquatics director, has developed programs for people with Down syndrome and kids with autism," said Johnson. "We have snow day programs and

TUSCARAWAS COUNTY YMCA



day off programs." Those programs are targeted at children who are off school for a day.

Harris Day Architects of Canton designed and oversaw the improvement project. Architect Burt Marzley worked on the county YMCA renovation. "He did a fantastic job," Lands said. "He oversaw the construction. They've done other Y's."

Lands said one of the discoveries made during the project was that there was only one water shutoff – to the entire building, so workers put valves throughout the building, so water could be shut off only where needed.

While the only renovation done in the Wellness Center was painting, new flooring and the addition of a staff desk, there were other improvements. "The staff worked on the mechanics," said Johnson. "They work out; they know and talk to members who use the center. Since the equipment was moved for replacement of the flooring, the staff rearranged it. They put it back in a better order. There's more room between equipment. That's especially good for our special needs members."

Other improvements included moving the youth fitness center to the balcony of the gym. Lands said the change was made so the center would be more visible and to increase usage. The cycling room was relocated so there'd be more room for members who use it.

Other changes that were visible were more involved. The racquetball courts got new walls, better lighting and finished floors. A multipurpose room was added. The room has a catering kitchen and seats about 120.

As the project neared completion, a major contractor, Raeder Construction, closed. "We had very small pieces to finish when Raeder pulled out," Johnson said. "They were things we had planned to do ourselves, so that didn't affect us."

Johnson said the project has changed the way the Y staff does its job. "We're hoping to do a better job," she said. "During construction the staff was trained to listen to members in a different way, to ask questions, to examine how we communicate with each other."

Now that the renovation project is pretty much done, Lands, Johnson, the board and staff have turned their attention to a new concern – the economy.

"Since the day it started, the YMCA has refused to deny any child access to the facilities because of an inability to pay," Lands said. "If a mother has come in and said, 'We can't pay,' we ask if it would help if we gave them a family membership."

Now, as members are finding themselves without jobs, some have gone to the local YMCA to turn in their cards and tell the staff that they can no longer pay.

"We don't want anyone to miss working out for a day," Lands said. "We're trying to step up and help members through a difficult time. We won't cancel a membership if someone is laid off. We'll extend it for three months. At the end of three months, if they're back to work, they call us. If they're still out of a job, we'll extend it another three months. If there's a time that people need to work off stress, it's when they are out of work."

The YMCA motto is "Spirit. Mind. Body."

"That hits home with me," said Johnson. "The spirit is diminished when you're laid off, and we can't help with the spirit if members aren't here. We don't want anyone to cut off a healthy lifestyle because they can't afford it."

The Y's Strong Kids campaign helps pay for memberships for anyone who cannot afford to pay. The fundraiser kicks off in February. Last year, \$95,000 was raised to assist children and families with memberships.



The renovation of the Tuscarawas County YMCA was a challenge to staff as they worked around demolition and construction crews while trying to accommodate members' needs. This is a photo of the new multipurpose room during construction.