

Haverford YMCA a hit with its new members



Bernie Brody, a 25-year member of the YMCA, swims in one of the three pools inside the new Haverford YMCA on Eagle Road in Havertown. (Times staff / ERIC HARTLINE)

By LOIS PUGLIONESI, Times Correspondent

POSTED: 10/02/13, 12:01 AM EDT | UPDATED: ON 10/02/2013

1 COMMENT

HAVERFORD — When Anne Slater saw the “great big building with fantastic architecture” while driving down Eagle Road, she knew it was what she’d been waiting for — the new Haverford Area YMCA.

An Ardmore resident and swimming enthusiast in search of a pool, Slater had her hopes pinned on the new Y’s aquatics facility, complete with lap pool, warm water exercise pool, whirlpool, sauna and family fun pool.

So on Tuesday morning, when the Y had a soft opening, Slater was among those signing up for memberships.

“I can’t wait to use it,” she said.

Apparently, Slater wasn’t alone. Vice President of Membership and Programs Jamie Bruning said 12 swimmers arrived when doors opened at 5 a.m. By mid-morning, the Y’s 10,000-square-foot Wellness Center was humming with activity, too, as members walked and jogged on cutting edge treadmills, equipped with custom programs, high-definition TV and soon-to-be-activated Internet access. Others pedaled stationery bikes lined up along a window-wall facing Eagle Road.

“It’s absolutely gorgeous, beautiful,” said Adele Mocerino of Havertown. “I think it’s going to be very well-received in the community. I think this is something we needed. I think it’s terrific because there isn’t really anything like it around.”

Working out with weights, Andre Doszpoly and his son, Stephen, were among the 2,000 former Main Line YMCA families that transferred to the new facility after the Main Line Y closed Sept. 22.

“It’s nice, very spacious,” Doszpoly said.

An additional 1,300 area households have joined to date, Bruning said, for a total of about 7,000 members.

“We’re being extremely well-received by the community,” he said.

Unlike suburban Ys that have a rustic, woodsy feel, the Haverford Y has a lofty, urban look with high ceilings and windowed walls that reduce lighting needs.

“We’re trying to be a signature place for the township to be proud of. We want to put our best foot forward,” Bruning said.

A full slate of classes, including yoga, zumba, Body Pump and more, begins Oct. 7. Also offered are programs for children and teens, including cooking, dance, swimming lessons, photography, chess, martial arts and more. A child watch area accommodates children for up to two hours while parents work out.

The 75,000-square-foot facility also features a double gym that will be named for Y supporter, Chester native and NBA player Jameer Nelson of Orlando Magic at an upcoming special event, Bruning said. Expected to open Wednesday, the Y’s upper level houses a track, group exercise and cycle studios, more intimate work-out space and TRX training area.

Memberships are required to use the facility and/or attend classes. Full privilege memberships for families cost \$98.50 per month, plus a one-time, nonrefundable charter fee of \$149. Adults 24-64 pay \$62 per month with a \$99 charter fee. Memberships for seniors (65 and over) run \$49 per month and require a \$99 charter membership. Children in seventh grade attend free. Financial assistance is available.

In addition to providing recreation and fitness opportunities, the \$24 million project will generate about 150 jobs, Bruning said.

The Y is leasing the six-acre parcel, former home to the Swell bubble gum factory, from the township. The township acquired the property through eminent domain in 2009 for purposes of constructing township and/or community facilities. However, the township’s \$1.26 million just compensation payment was disputed by former owners, the Fenimore family, who claimed the property was worth \$6 million. The Fenimores took their case to the Delaware County Board of View, which awarded them \$6 million in damages. The township subsequently appealed that decision in Delaware County Court of Common Pleas. Litigation is pending.

The township entered into a 25-year ground lease agreement with the Y, considered a purely public charity, in 2010. The Y assumed responsibility for demolition of the former factory, construction of a new facility and necessary improvements.

With traffic a major concern, Haverford’s Planning Commission required the Y to conduct pre- and post-construction traffic studies, and remediate as necessary. A new traffic signal and turning lanes have been installed.

A grand opening with formal ribbon-cutting ceremony is slated for 10 a.m. Oct 11.