

OUR TOWNS

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HUNTINGTON

A PLACE YOU CAN GO

\$9M YMCA center opens today, with focus on community's needs

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YMCA officials asked Huntington residents what kind of services they want. On Monday, they'll get what they asked for.

The Y opens its Jorge Family Healthy Living Center on Main Street with a focus on health enhancement, youth development and community enrichment. The \$9.2 million, 30,000-square-foot center includes a 7,500 square-foot gymnasium, full size basketball court, two volleyball courts and four Pickleball courts and will offer more than 100 exercise classes each week and recreations sports programs.

"We did a lot of due diligence and research in identifying what the community needs were, and not building what we thought the community needed, but listened to what they told us they needed," senior vice president and chief operating officer Eileen Knauer said. "That, for me, is a critical piece of this building: knowing it will be successful because we listened, and we heard."

The center has been seven years in the making.

YMCA officials finished construction of the Sammis Child-care Center in 2010 to accommodate growing demand for child-care facilities and an updated fitness center, but demand continued for space on the campus for group exercise, sports and dance classes that had been taking place at the town-owned Flanagan Center on Park Avenue.

"Those members who use those programs said, 'What about us? What are we getting?'" Knauer said. "At a board meeting, a board member said we really need to address those issues because people were leaving" the Y.



SHELBY KNOWLES

Seven years in the making, the YMCA Jorge Family Healthy Living Center open its doors Monday.

The healthy living center's focus is on creating stronger, healthier families, Knauer said. Once opened, it will increase access to programs focused on chronic disease prevention and recovery.

"Prevention is huge, and it's naturally what the Y does, because that's what we're about," Knauer said. "It's about improving your quality of life, it's about getting healthier, and staying healthier and maintaining."

Funding for the center came from \$5.3 million in donations, including by The Dolan Family Foundation, The Rauch Family Foundation and other private sources as well as state grants.

The center is named for the Jorge family of Huntington and Glen Cove, which through its foundation donated \$1 mil-

Center's offerings

The YMCA's new healthy living center offerings include:

- Outdoor group exercise space
- An indoor track
- Classes such as yoga, pilates, spin, barre, interval training, zumba, triathlon training as well as exercise programs for children and seniors

lion to the center. Judy Jorge, a longtime Y member and part of the center's steering committee, said the project helped her understand the impact the Healthy Living Center would have on many other programs beyond what people think the Y does.

"It's not just swimming and

exercise at the Y. All of the programs at the Healthy Living Center will go beyond building healthy minds and bodies — they will build communities, our community," Jorge said in an email. "This new building will impact so many children, families, adults and seniors."

Anne Brigis, president and chief executive of YMCA of Long Island, said the center's opening and the YMCA's 100th anniversary create an exciting time for the organization.

"As you think about the Y, it's a community institution like no other. For me it's a force for good," Brigis said. "It's a beacon of hope, and in this new center, people will have the opportunity to be learning, striving to be better, do better and really to help others to be their personal best."