

Open house celebrates opening of Saratoga Springs Recreation Center **(With video)**

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Mayor Scott Johnson cuts the "ribbon" made by Camp Saradac children at the July 28 grand opening of the Saratoga Springs Recreation Center. At far right is Derrick Legall, head of the volunteer Recreation Commission. The rest are elected Saratoga Springs city, county and state legislators, from left, Public Safety Commissioner Richard Wirth, Accounts Commissioner John Franck, Supervisors Matt Veitch and Joanne Yepsen, Sen. Roy McDonald and Assemblyman Jim Tedisco, and Finance Commissioner Ken Ivins.

SARATOGA SPRINGS — Residents of all ages were joined by city, county and state officials Tuesday evening for the official grand opening ceremony of the Saratoga Springs Recreation Center at 15 Vanderbilt Ave.

While Camp Saradac has been operating at the facility since July 6, regular gym hours, from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday, will begin today.

Mayor Scott Johnson was joined by recreation department officials, members of the Recreation Commission, four of five city council members, Saratoga Springs Supervisors Matthew Veitch and Joanne Yepsen and State Assemblyman Jim Tedisco and Sen. Roy McDonald as he cut a paper chain made and decorated for the ceremony by campers.

“This is much better,” said 10-year-old city resident Hannah White when asked how her summer at Camp Saradac this year has compared to those summers previously spent at the East Side Recreation Fields. White has attended the camp since 2006.

“Hopefully all summer,” said 10-year-old Tyler Smith when asked how often he would be at the facility.

“I’m going to be here a lot, especially in the winter,” said Supervisor Veitch, who has played recreational racquetball since high school.

“The sky is the limit,” proclaimed Recreation Department Director Linda Terricola, thanking those officials and employees who pushed for construction of the center over the past 16 years, many of whom were among the crowd.

“My hope is that we will all be able to enjoy this facility,” said Recreation Commission Chairman Derrick Legall.

The building contains a two-lane walking track and markings and equipment for four United States junior high school-size basketball courts, two collegiate-size courts, two large tournament-style volleyball courts and four smaller volleyball courts.

City residents and residents who live within the Saratoga Springs City School District can use the gymnasium during open gym hours for free, and non-residents will be charged \$5 per session to use the gym.

A racquetball court at the far end of the gym with markings for racquetball, handball, squash and equipment for Wallyball (a variation of volleyball) will be available at a cost of \$5 per hour, per player for city and school district residents, and \$10 per hour, per player, per hour for non-city, non-district residents.

Legall said the fee schedule reflects the agreement the city made with the school district that requires the property be used for recreation purposes. A copy of the deed for the property was not available in the city assessor's office Tuesday.

"We will make this facility self-sufficient in two years," Legall said, before listing a series of partnerships the commission has planned for organizing workshops, tutoring and providing volunteer opportunities through the center. The gymnasium and the community room will be rentable for groups to hold tournaments or events at a rate of \$45 per hour for one of the smaller courts, \$95 per hour for two, or \$195 per hour for all four courts.

Groups will be charged in two-hour blocks for use of the community room: \$20 per block for local nonprofits, \$25 per block for nonprofits based outside the city and the school district and \$30 per block for all ordinary businesses. The rooms will not be available for rental until Sept. 7, when the facility extends hours for the fall.

Some groups have already secured the facility for events. On Tuesday evening, fliers for a Dec. 11 live professional wrestling event presented by In Your Face Wrestling dubbed "Controlled Chaos" were set out in the lobby of the building.

Fees for use of the community room, gym space and kitchen for birthday parties, as well as fees for locker rentals, should be finalized for City Council consideration by September.

Certain furnishings city officials hoped would be in place for the opening, like scoreboards and bleachers, are expected to be funded by community donations.

Brien Hollowood, who emceed the event, is also the chairman of the Friends of Recreation, who have between \$60,000 and \$70,000 they will use to purchase scoreboards, which will then be donated to the city. During closing remarks, Hollowood asked community members for their financial support to fully furnish the facility.

"We saved the best for last," said Mayor Scott Johnson, who went on to confirm that construction costs had been totaled at less than the \$6.5 million bonded for the facility. He went on to say his department has been working with Public Works Commissioner Anthony "Skip" Scirocco to address the facility's staffing needs.

Deputy Mayor Shauna Sutton said no additional personnel would likely be hired for the facility before departmental budgets are due Aug. 18. "We're going to make due," she said.

At the July 20 council meeting, Finance Commissioner Kenneth Ivins Jr. requested a 10 percent cut in departmental operating budgets. Scirocco was not in attendance at the opening.