

Pool set to open in June

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"It'll have six lanes, be 50 meters long and have a large deck," YMCA Development Director Greg Dembowski said of the pool, which has been constructed through most of the winter at the day camp that sits adjacent to the Greenknoll branch's main building on Huckleberry Hill Road in Brookfield.

Since the formal groundbreaking last October, the YMCA has raised an additional \$75,000 toward the pool project, bringing the grand total for that phase to \$925,000, according to Mr. Dembowski. He noted that there were 243 contributors as of Feb. 15.

"We've already received interest from people stopping at the front desk asking about the schedule for the new pool," the Brookfield resident said regarding the facility, which will be formally dedicated during a ceremony June 16.

He said the schedule for the facility would probably be posted within weeks.

The development director said that there has been a demand in recent years for additional pool space at the Greenknoll branch, which opened in 1988 and has one large pool and a small therapeutic swim area.

Brookfield First Selectman Jerry Murphy has said that there has been a growing interest in swimming in the area in recent years, noting that, for example, the Brookfield High School (BHS) boys swim team has won several state and conference titles.

The BHS boys and girls swim teams don't have their own pool, and for years, through the help of the Regional YMCA, they have practiced in the Olympic-length pool at the Greenknoll branch. Mr. Dembowski said that \$2.9 million would be needed to construct the new pool, a large locker room area, an observation gallery, and an enclosure that would make it a year-round facility and to make parking lot improvements.

"I think once the new pool is visible we will see another surge in contributions for this aquatic center," said George Walker of Brookfield, the chairman of the Regional YMCA's Board of Directors.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has backed a \$2.1 million loan for part of the project. Union Savings Bank, NewMil Bank, Newtown Savings Bank and the Savings Bank of Danbury also are providing assistance.

Robert Steers, an area specialist with the USDA office in Windsor, has said that the aquatic center "will create over 45 new jobs and save over 200 jobs in this area."

The YMCA launched its \$4 million capital campaign last April at a news conference that was attended by Danbury Mayor Mark Boughton, a former counselor at the Greenknoll day camp, and Mr. Murphy.

About \$833,000 from the capital campaign has been used to renovate the YMCA's Boughton Street branch in Danbury, which had been in danger of closing less than two years ago because of limited membership.

Mr. Walker said the appropriation was higher than the initial \$700,000 estimate because it was additionally determined that the roof at the facility needed to be repaired.

"It truly has been a transformation," he said of the impact of the improvements to the Danbury facility, which were formally recognized Dec. 16.

"We've seen a significant increase in membership as a result of the renovations," Mr. Walker added.

Mr. Dembowski said that part of the money from the capital campaign is being devoted to increasing the Regional YMCA's program offerings.

In addition to the two main branches, the YMCA has satellite facilities in Bethel and New Fairfield and on Main Street in Danbury.