

Community center opening celebrated



By Lauren McLane/The Record Herald

This plaque was unveiled at the Fort Ritchie Community Center grand opening Saturday.

Photos



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By Lauren McLane
The Record Herald
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Cascade, Md. -

The culmination of two years of planning on a \$5 million project came to fruition Saturday with the grand opening of the Fort Ritchie Community Center.

The fort was closed in 1998 during Base Realignment and Closure program. PenMar Development Corp. was charged with finding a new use for the land and sold the property Corporate Office Properties Trust, which is redeveloping the area with office, retail and residential space.

Re-development

"Wow! What a start to the redevelopment. This is just the beginning. The community center is meeting not just the recreational but the social needs of the community. COPT is living up its promise and doing a great job," Mike Christopher, Washington Township manager, said.

Rand Griffin, president and chief executive officer of COPT, called the facility "really, very amazing. It was a regional effort and a regional success, thanks to four counties in two states."

George G.B. Griffin, chairman of PMDC, called it a "symbolic beginning to the rebuilding. After 10 years of constant frustration, this is the long-awaited day."

He cited Bob Davis, who died in 2005, as a driving force behind the redevelopment. In memory of Davis, who served on PMDC, Griffin is recommending that the board name a community center meeting room in his honor.

Specs

The 20,000-square-foot community center has a renovated gymnasium with a high school regulation-size basketball court, a 30-by-65-foot multi-sport room with absorbent floor for high-impact exercise, a state-of-the-art fitness center, a game room, a craft room, a computer/reading room, two meeting rooms and a snack bar. Outdoor amenities including tennis courts and soccer and baseball fields are coming soon.

The facility is open to residents of Franklin, Adams, Washington and Frederick counties. It opens Oct. 1 with hours from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday. It is closed Sunday and Monday, although expanded hours are expected to be added by December.

The new 20,000-square-foot facility is "green," meaning it is environmentally friendly. Built to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification levels, it is the first "green" building in Washington County.

Some of the ways the building is environmentally friendly include the use of rubber, a natural material, instead of vinyl, which can release dangerous toxins; the use of low-volatile organic compounds emission paint; lots of operable windows to allow natural light and ventilation; and recycled flooring and building materials in the fitness center and other areas.

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