



YMCA IN THE NEWS

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Community cuts ribbon on regional YMCA in Putnam By Francesca Kefalas For The Norwich Bulletin Posted Feb. 27, 2016 at 6:44 PM

PUTNAM— It took almost a decade, but Betty Hale finally took a swim in Putnam.

Hale and her family got a sneak peak of the Hale YMCA Youth and Family Center Friday, the day before its official opening and ribbon cutting. Hale said she most certainly took the opportunity to take a dip in the pool - a pool she and her husband, Newell, dreamed of bringing to the community long ago.

"It was wonderful," Hale said of the swim. "Newell would be proud of what's been done here."

Hale and her son, Laurence, cut the ribbon Saturday while other community members and leadership from the Greater Hartford YMCA stood next to them. Both Hales commended the community for making the YMCA a reality, but it was Betty and Newell's dream that started the conversation and a \$3 million donation from the Newell D. Hale Foundation that got the project off the ground.

Laurence Hale said it truly started with a small party in 2007 to discuss the idea of a community pool that then blossomed into dozens of people working to build the YMCA off Kennedy Drive.

Harold Sparrow, the third executive director of Greater Hartford YMCA to oversee the project, said he arrived after construction had already begun and was struck by the community commitment and investment in the project. He said the Hales created the spark, but the YMCA is a triumph of the community.

"You really, really truly care for each other," Sparrow said. "What you've done here is truly special. You've taken an idea and turned it into a reality."

The \$14.6 million, 46,000 square-foot facility features not just one, but two pools, one of which is a warm-water zero-entry pool designed to give access to people with disabilities. The YMCA also has men's, women's and family locker rooms, a co-ed steam room, a co-ed sauna and a co-ed whirlpool. It also features a full-sized gymnasium, named after Jim Calhoun, the honorary capital campaign chairman, for full-court and half-court basketball as well as volleyball and other hard court activities, a health and wellness center featuring treadmills, elliptical machines, weight machines, free weights and more, two multipurpose rooms, one geared toward group classes, such as yoga, pilates and Zumba, and another with a rubber floor for small classes in modalities, such as TRX and other functional training programs.

Executive Director Amanda Kelly said as of Friday the YMCA has sold 500 memberships, which account for 1,200 people. She said the goal is to have 800 membership units sold by Monday, the day programs are up and running.

There will be a soft opening Sunday, where members and potential members can come and use some of the facility. Potential members can also sign up for the last day of a promotion that offers memberships at reduced rates.