

# YMCA Expands to Newly Family-Friendly Facility

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A few short hours after starting his Saturday with weights and a spin class at the Crescenta-Cañada Family YMCA on Foothill Boulevard, La Cañada Flintridge City Councilman Jonathan Curtis was back at the Y — stopping in at the newly opened facility in La Crescenta.

He was among 250 visitors who streamed through during an open house at the facility at 3931 Lowell Ave., the former site of the Foothill Athletic Club.

The Crescenta Valley YMCA opened last week, just after escrow closed Jan. 18 on the sale transferring the property from previous owners Patrick Kendall and Charlie Baca to the YMCA of the Foothills, which also operates at sites in LCF and Verdugo Hills.

Multiple renovation phases are planned at the Crescenta Valley branch, with an eye toward an official ribbon-cutting in June. But by Saturday, the transformation had begun.



The lobby that previously held a counter and a turnstile had turned into an open space decorated in the YMCA's recognizably bright colors.

Construction was to begin this week on the room abutting the lobby, which soon will host the "Building Blocks" area. That's where parents can leave their kids to play with attendants such as Chris Lazo, who on Saturday was proving a worthy assistant to Ryan Rosales, 7, who was creating his personal vision of a farmhouse out of a toy construction set.

The new vision for the Crescenta Valley YMCA extended beyond the structural, said Rosanne Malogolowkin, vice president of Healthy Living.

"You started to have families and kids and people of all different ages, whereas if you came before, it wasn't like that," she said. "It started to have the total culture of the YMCA."

And that's going to work out just fine, according to Baca, who managed the athletic club for 35 years.

"Other entities had wanted it, but they would not have fit as nicely as the YMCA," said Baca while pedaling on a stationary bike. "It's the same type of an entity, and even though the YMCA is more family-oriented than we were — we were more for adults, 16 and over — it's still a perfect fit because they carry on in our tradition."

That tradition, Councilman Curtis will tell you, is as much about the programs that the YMCA offers the approximately 30,000 members it serves in the Foothill communities as its on-site amenities or exercise equipment.

"It's more than an exercise facility," said Curtis, for whom growing up as "Y brat" established a regimen that has him dutifully returning to LCF's YMCA five or six times a week. "It's everything else the Y does. That's what's so special about it."

Tyler Wright, president and CEO of the YMCA of the Foothills, was happy to list some of the varied endeavors in which YMCA personnel participated over the weekend: A robotics team of elementary- and middle-school-age kids won its first competition to earn an invitation to a national contest in Iowa; 30 people were engaged in a community service project in Sunland-Tujunga; the Youth and Government group was well-represented in Fresno, where the local delegation had a lieutenant governor elected.

And, yes, a third facility opened.



The nearly 15,000-square-foot facility features 100 parking spaces, easy freeway access and additional space to bring the YMCA's number of programming offerings at its three facilities from around 250 to nearly 300, Malogolowkin said.

The studios currently dedicated to exercise classes will remain as they are, as will the heated, 20-yard outdoor pool, which she said presents an opportunity for the YMCA to relieve some of the swim class crowding at its other facilities.

But the weight equipment currently available will be consolidated, replaced or removed as the focus will shift toward a more functional type of training.

"We're going to offer TRX classes, kind of like a CrossFit, boot camp kind of experience," Malogolowkin said.

The racquetball courts will become "kids' movement kind of spaces," she added, indicating that members can expect gymnastic classes, mommy-and-me classes, as well as rope- and wall-climbing opportunities.



Upstairs on the second floor, the current cardio exercise space will shift to an area currently filled with traditional weight-lifting equipment, with plans for the vacated space to be a dedicated yoga studio.

Out back, a couple of portable buildings will be used to house staff and establish another place where young people can experiment with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), as the winning Robotics Club has been in LCF.

There are even plans to make use of the trailhead near the pool, Malogolowkin said.

"We're already planning programs for kids, and moms and strollers, for running on the trails," she said. "It's so great. This place is a little gem."

Wright said the initial reception from Foothill Athletic Club members has been better than expected, with about half of the 1,400 on the roster signing on as YMCA members since the ownership change.

The YMCA of the Foothills offers memberships for \$59 per month for adults, an increase from the \$40 a month that Foothill Athletic Club paid. But those who enrolled paid just \$20.16 for January and are to be billed their previous rate through June. Also, Wright said, the \$100 joining fee was to be waived for former athletic club patrons.

"What we want is for the Foothill Athletic Club members to become part of our Y family," Wright said.