

Owensboro YMCA holds ribbon-cutting for child care expansion

BY SCOTT HAGERMAN
MESSENGER-INQUIRER

The Owensboro YMCA is doing all it can to increase child care options for area residents, and the first phase of that process was celebrated Wednesday, Aug. 27, afternoon with a ribbon-cutting for the 6 weeks to 4 year old section of the facility.

The first of the three-phase expansion adds 38 slots for either infants, toddlers or preschool-age children at a cost of a little more than \$250,000, which was raised through community support.

“The funding for today’s project came from us, and several charities in town,” said Tom Bontrager, YMCA president and CEO. “I will say that every foundation in town has been awesome to deal with, and they know the priority of child care in town. We’re able to do all of this with zero loans and a lot of support from the community. The painting, we had groups come in and paint. We had a business give us a flooring at cost. It’s just been phenomenal.”

Perhaps most amazing about the project is how quickly the YMCA was able to adjust to be able to get the first phase ready to open Tuesday.

Upon learning of the daycare at Lourdes Catholic Church was slated to close at the end of July, the process of getting child care licenses was expedited.

“This all came to me in August, and then all of sudden we had to get the infant-toddler open,” Bontrager said. “Between Aug. 1 and today the (Kentucky Division of Licensed Child Care) have been phenomenal to work



Photos by Alan Warren, Messenger-Inquirer

Thomas Bontrager, president and CEO, speaks on Wednesday, Aug. 27, at the ribbon-cutting for the new Owensboro YMCA Infant and Toddler Child Care Program.

with. They’ve been literally coming to check us to tell us what to get fixed when they came in for the license. That was wonderful.

“And kudos to Child Care Aware, which is the organization that comes out and trains. They’ve done the training for our staff; they’ve been here with us every step of the way to make sure this is a successful program.”

By getting additional rooms licensed, the YMCA can still continue to serve school-age children without the second phase of the project being completed.

“We have school age in the building right now, so we have kids on top of us starting about three o’clock, which is awesome; brings great energy to the Y,” Bontrager said. “The goal is when this is said and done is to expand by 150 child care slots, done in three phases.”

The second phase of the project is the completion of a 6,000-square-foot building that will be home to the school-age children. It’s expected to open in January.

“That’s where the city, state and county all have helped us do that, along with our board of trustees,” Bontrager said. “So we’re able to build that building at about \$2 million, with no debt. We’re able to go in and do it the correct way, and it’s going to be spectacular.”

The third phase of the project, which the YMCA is currently working on a Community Development Block Grant with Daviess Fiscal Court to fund, will be creating 50 additional child care slots by remodeling the racquetball courts.

“This project is truly one of those that encapsulate the spirit of Owensboro,” said Candance Castlen Brake, president and CEO of the Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce. “Give us an issue, tell us others aren’t making it work, and we are going to get together and make it work. I want to thank the Y and their leadership here for making this one happen. This really does encapsulate one of the things when we say it’s amazing what



Area residents tour a 6-week-old to 12-month-old child care room on Wednesday, Aug. 27, at the ribbon-cutting for the new Owensboro YMCA Infant and Toddler Child Care Program.

you can accomplish when nobody is worried about who gets the credit.

“That’s a prefect example of who we are as a community and organizations. We come together ... and make it happen for the good of the community.”

Daviess County Judge-Executive Charlie Castlen spoke of his first-hand knowledge about the need for child care in Daviess County, as his grandchildren were displaced when Lourdes’ daycare closed July 31. That put urgency on the YMCA child care being open as soon as possible.

Castlen said his daughter called “day care after day care and they all had a list,” he said. “What they’ve done since is, I think, incredible, because what their plans were was over here, and when something didn’t pan out, they made this other thing work on the fly, and they did it almost at the drop of a hat.”

State Sen. DJ Johnson said the project is a perfect example of what can be accomplished when entities work together to find an answer to issues.

“This is absolutely exciting; this is what a community is about,” Johnson said. “This is what happens when a bunch of people come together and see a need. They don’t look at the problems, they look at the solutions.

“This is a momentous day today for Daviess County and for this entire region.”

Joe Berry, executive director of the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro, which contributed to the

project, noted how different segments can come together for the betterment of the projects.

“This is truly a shiny example of a coalition that was built between government, between business and between philanthropy,” Berry

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Livermore, KY 42352 appointed Executor/Executrix
Harrison Taylor
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