

Belfast's Centenary House builds a gym

Residents explore the link between physical, mental and spiritual well-being.

Tony-O'Neill The Salvation Army's Centenary House in Belfast, Northern Ireland, has a new gym, built at the request of residents who completed a fitness program at a nearby Pure Gym.

Centenary House is one of the Army's Lifehouse facilities, which offer short-term accommodations for men in need of housing, plus activities and training to improve clients' self-esteem, mental health and employment prospects.



Former Lifehouse resident Tony O'Neill is helping the center that turned his life around by co-running, with Pure Gym, a fitness program for current residents at the new gym.

"I know from personal experience that it is a great source of anger management, and being able to work out is really beneficial for your overall health," O'Neill said. He worked to become a personal trainer while living at the center.

A public donation allowed Centenary House to build its own gym in a unit that had been empty for some time. Residents fully participated in the gym's ongoing design and art work.

"The gym is a great opportunity for me and the other guys," said Michael, a current resident. "It gives us something to do in the day when there is the potential for us to build up frustrations. The gym is a really good outlet to work out any issues but more than that is a great opportunity to stay healthy and motivated."

Centenary House Service Manager Stephen Potter said that the center seeks to constantly expand opportunities for its residents, and that their suggestions are taken seriously.

"We have called this our 'Spirit Gym,' recognizing that, while The Salvation Army offers unconditional holistic support to anyone in need, we also care about their spiritual well-being," Potter said. "We have painted a passage from Hebrews on our wall that talks about running the race with perseverance—not only does this talk about sticking true to the Christian journey but also reminding our residents to persevere in life."

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