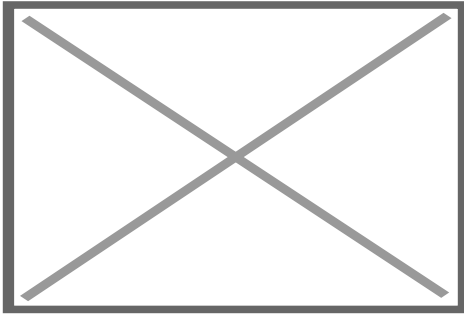


Coeur d'Alene Kroc-it's a WOW

by Sue Schumann Warner



Tribal leaders join the celebration

It was a “Wow!” weekend in Coeur d’Alene as the West’s newest Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center opened in a city that vigorously pursued, planned for, and supported the ambitious endeavor. The culmination of over five years of hard work, determination, and community activism—plus a mayor dedicated to the project—was on display May 8-11 as the community glimpsed for the first time the many faceted elements of their very own Kroc Center.

“For years we’d been trying to get a community center, without success,” stated Dr. Jack Riggs, co-chair of the capital campaign and former Lt. Governor of Idaho. “When the opportunity came to get a [Kroc] center, it was amazing. There has been so much pent-up need here...to have a facility within the fabric of The Salvation Army is beyond description. For me, the real connection was that it was The Salvation Army.”

The presence of the Army in Coeur d’Alene was a key determination to many. “One of the biggest parts of this gift is to have The Salvation Army in our community,” stated Mayor Sandi Bloem, who has served as the chair of the local Salvation Army advisory board since its inception. “The center will be life changing for many people; it will be *the* gathering place for the community. The journey starts now!”

Ideal location

The center’s location suits its purpose perfectly. Located just off Interstate 90, the Kroc Center is adjacent to city softball and soccer fields as well as a city park. Schools and housing are nearby. The 68-mile long Centennial Trail, which links Spokane, Wash., with Coeur d’Alene, connects to the facility—enabling access by bicycle or foot.

From the welcoming lobby, with its soaring ceiling, fireplace, warm wood accents and northwest décor, to the many exercise and community gathering spaces throughout, the center makes a strong

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statement: we care about you—body, mind and spirit.

“Wow!” exclaimed Lt. Colonel Doug O’Brien, Northwest divisional commander, upon seeing the completed center for the first time. “For six years I was responsible for the San Diego Kroc Center. This is the most beautiful center I’ve seen for changing and transforming lives. It’s so clear the whole community has embraced it.”

“It takes my breath away to see this facility,” said city council member and former mayor Al Hassell. “For this area to have something like this—it’s a community asset. I can’t wait to get my grandkids here!”

Local enthusiasm

Enthusiasm for the center has run high in Coeur d’Alene and throughout the surrounding area. While this northern Idaho community, surrounded by forests and nestled along the shore of Lake Coeur d’Alene, has been blessed with an abundance of natural beauty, it has had no community center, municipal swimming pool, or performing arts center—until the Kroc Center came to town.

On Saturday morning, the day of the dedication, locals were buzzing about it in coffee bars and cafes downtown. At Java on Sherman, real estate broker Renice Sandler stated, “This is a huge draw for the community. It’s such a gift. A 55+ community is underway near the center; it will be a huge asset.”

Bill Johnson noted that it would draw people from smaller communities in the area. “We’re a small, family-oriented town. The Kroc Center will be packed, especially in this economy.”

And outside the center itself, Keith, 78, and Barbara Gray, 74, stopped by before the opening. “We’ve got ownership,” Barbara said. She had already signed up and had made a contribution early on. “I’m looking forward to walking on the indoor track in the winter,” she stated.

The Olympic sized swimming pool, made by Myrtha Pools of Italy—manufacturer of the 2008 Olympic competition pool for Beijing—was a priority for Advisory Board Member Dave Barnes. “Swimming is a lifetime sport that hasn’t been part of our culture [here] due to the weather,” said Barnes, who went to college on a swimming scholarship. “Building a culture of swimming would be great for our community.” He added a crucial reason for backing the project: “I want kids to learn to swim before they drown in the lake in the summer.”

Tribal support

The Coeur d’Alene Tribe has been a staunch supporter of the center, donating \$1 million to the project. “We believe in investing back in our community,” said Tribal Council Chairman Chief Allen, who noted that the center will offer pride to the area. “These kids will be able to go someplace and have things available that aren’t otherwise. We believe in kids.”