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Growing for the better



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*Cumberland YMCA CEO Trina Clarke looks over plans for the facility's \$2-million renovation project that will expand the YMCA's child-care centre and enhance fitness programming.
Darrell Cole - Amherst Daily News*

Renovations to expand Y begin

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AMHERST - The Cumberland YMCA is set to grow as it prepares to being a \$2-million renovation project that will enlarge its child-care capabilities and improve fitness programming.

The YMCA's board of directors and the project leader are putting the final touches on the first phase of the project that will see the footprint of the southwest portion of the building expanded to 7,000 square-feet.

"There's a level of support that has been put in place that is ensuring that we have the time to make the building work," said YMCA CEO Trina Clarke. "The partnerships we have created, the people who have come forward and the staff are all working hard to make sure this building will be sustainable."

The work is expected to begin sometime in August with a completion date next spring.

Soon after work begins on the child-care centre, workers will begin work modifying the gymnasium and racquetball court areas. The gymnasium will be reduced in size by a third and combined with the racquetball courts to develop a pair of studios for fitness programs and other programs offered by the facility.

"There will be a studio on each floor for fitness classes, meditation and things like yoga," said Clarke. "The weight room and cardio will go into that space as well. That will free up the space at the centre of the building for meeting space, as it was originally intended for."

With the renovations, the child-care centre will be expanded from about 120 children to 160. The project is being funded by \$133,000 provided by the provincial Community Services Department. Seventy-five per cent of that amount is forgivable.

"This is all part of our long-term sustainability plan," Clarke said. "Our partnerships with the town and the county have given us five years to implement this plan. Operationally after five years, there is no guarantee that the county money will continue. The town's money is solely for the pool."

The other part of the renovation is being funded by \$208,000 in federal funding announced back in February. The remaining money is coming from reserves and other sources.

Clarke said the Knights of Columbus have come to the assistance of the YMCA in that they will be providing their building on Robie Street for fitness and youth programs for the four months that the renovations are taking place.

"We made a presentation to them explaining our needs and saying we'd understand if there was rent associated with it," said Clarke. "Within 24 hours we got a response saying they'd be pleased to support us by offering the building at no cost during what we anticipate will be four months we need."

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