

Senior center influenced by young professionals

Modern Maturity Center's Aurich Pool and Fitness Center grand opening today

Delaware State News

DOVER — When Modern Maturity Center in Dover holds the grand opening of its Aurich Pool and Fitness Center today at 12:30 p.m., a team of people who are years too young to be members will have played a key role.

"We had the privilege of working with four young, very bright professionals from the Leadership Delaware Institute," said Carolyn Fredricks, the center's president and CEO.

"Their input really focused our efforts on revamping our fitness program, attracting and serving more older adults and ultimately strengthening our business position to help insure this center's long-term success.

The Modern Maturity Center is currently Delaware's largest senior center serving over 3,500 older adults daily. Last year Ms. Fredricks said the staff identified the indoor pool and fitness center as an area that needed attention.

"We also thought about capitaliz-

ing on fitness as a way to attract a new audience, particularly pre-retirees with an interest in exercise and fitness. And that would help us towards a larger goal of updating the Center's image," Ms. Fredericks said.

At the same time, a non-profit initiative was in development by LDI, a statewide program that identifies and develops young business leaders to strengthen their potential for broader contributions and impact.

"Leadership Delaware is designed to identify, educate, influence and empower our next generation of leaders," said founder, chairman and CEO Terry Strine.

Through an identification and matching process that included a speed dating session between LDI and non-profit organizations, MMC was ultimately matched with a group consisting of an attorney, a marketing non-profit executive, a newspaper reporter turned public relations director and a computer industry expert.

"We each put in 35 hours," estimates Wilmington attorney Anthony DelCollo, 30, who served on the LDI-MMC team. "Carolyn is an enthusiastic leader who was very welcoming so we just really jumped right in, first looking at the center's books, operations, facilities and marketing and

of course engaging with her to really understand the center."

Both Ms. Fredricks and Mr. DelCollo recall their joint priority of identifying and attracting a new market segment and to build up the pool and fitness center which seemed to have the greatest potential for drawing in that "younger older" population.

"We recommended engaging the community to identify current perceptions as well as rebranding and marketing the fitness center including the planning of a grand re-opening," Mr. DelCollo said. "All that would take funding of course."

At around the same time, Ms. Fredricks says fate stepped in. The center received a gift from the Aurich family for \$70,000.

"In appreciation, the pool and fitness center have been renamed in their honor. That gift allowed us to purchase new equipment, re-deck the pool area and paint and spruce up the entire fitness center.

So on Thursday (today) we'll officially cut the ribbon on the Aurich Pool and Fitness Center at MMC."

"For me in particular, this project was a wonderful challenge to work with a team including my LDI colleagues and Carolyn and to come out of my comfort zone," Mr. DelCol-

lo said.

Another of the LDI group's recommendations went into effect earlier this month. "We now have our first TV commercials," Ms. Fredricks said.

"This campaign is very targeted, airing only on channels with a large older adult population, and we're already hearing a lot of good response. We're watching our membership numbers to measure the impact."

And now Ms. Fredricks has become an unofficial ambassador for LDI's annual non-profit partnership project, having spoken to a group of potential partners in support of the 2016 program.

"Working with that team was such a positive experience for us. We had ideas in mind but our thinking kind of exploded with LDI's input. Almost a year later we're still developing their ideas and personally missing them too," she said.

Members of the LDI team expect to attend this week's grand opening and re-connect with Ms. Fredricks.

"We may not be old enough to become members but I think we'll always feel invested in the center and its people," Mr. DelCollo said.

ReShape

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their habits so they just need to continue with those positive changes once the balloons come out."

And patients are left to their own devices to stay healthy and continue weight loss — patients are set up with a scale that links to their computer, a FitBit to track their physical activity and access to an online portal where they can track their exercise and eating patterns.

"We expect patients to shed about 40 pounds from the procedure and there's no reason weight loss shouldn't continue after the balloons are removed," Dr. Halbert said. "Each patient has different goals and the amount of motivation the patient has will determine if they reach their goals or even exceed them."

Staying motivated

It can be difficult to stay motivated without resources so ReShape patients receive in-person assistance too with monthly consults with a nutritionist at the practice for 12 months. The consultations begin before the procedure is performed so patients can start their new lives with new, healthy habits.

"With bariatric surgery comes a lot of brand new rules like how much

you can eat, what you can and cannot eat but with the balloon, patients don't have these strict rules so they have to show a commitment and take the initiative to change their lives," Dr. Halbert said.

And although the nutritionist consults eventually come to an end, the patient portal remains open forever so patients can keep track of their progress for years to come.

"I love bariatric and weight loss surgery because I can help people who are motivated and committed to get healthy and go out and play with their kids, go off their diabetes medications and just lead a better life. It's so rewarding," Dr. Halbert said.

Christiana Institute of Advanced Surgery has four surgeons who perform weight-loss procedures. Dr. Halbert and her colleague Dr. Isaias Irgau are certified in ReShape and the other two soon will be certified as well.

"We have only done three procedures so far but have been hearing from 20 to 30 interested patients per week for the past two or three weeks," Dr. Halbert said. "And all the physicians here are all about the procedure and can't wait to offer it to their patients because it's a low-risk, high-yield procedure that can really improve people's lives."

Patients from Philadelphia to Bal-

timore to D.C. have shown interest in the practice's procedure because it's the only location in this area offering it.

But the current obstacle patients face with ReShape is a financial barrier because the procedure isn't yet covered by medical insurance, although Dr. Halbert has hopes it soon will be.

"These types of procedures, where patients make an investment in their health are worthwhile and we are hoping that it soon becomes more financially accessible to the patients that are good candidates and can benefit from the procedure," she said.

Very few people are ineligible for the procedure. It is a good option for individuals older than 18 with a BMI between 30 and 40 looking for assistance in losing about 40 pounds. Ineligible candidates are primarily those who have undergone previous stomach surgery including bariatric surgery.

For more information about ReShape, visit chrias.com or reshapeready.com.

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