

Monday, August 25, 2008

Rec Center celebrates 10th anniversary

By **Rebecca Wyatt Thomas**, OU Web Writer

Ten years ago, there was a lot less on campus. There was no Pawley Hall, no parking structure, no student apartments, no Elliott Hall, fewer students, fewer majors and no Rec Center and the programs that go along with it. In 1998, thanks to support from Student Congress, Student Affairs, Athletics and the OU administration the Recreation and Athletics Center was opened, replacing the Lepley Sports Center with a state-of-the-art fitness and athletics facility. Campus Recreation will celebrate the occasion with a tailgate prior to the annual Campus Recreation versus University Housing flag football match-up. A private, invitation-only event is also planned for charter members.

"In 1994, Student Congress passed a resolution in support of building a recreation center and the students voted on the fee for constructing and maintaining the building," said Greg Jordan, director of Campus Recreation. "It was a collaborative effort to bring the old athletics facility from archaic to state-of-the-art."

The Lepley Sports Center operated on an \$11,000 annual budget with a staff position split between coaching, intramural sports and facility management.

"There were no student-based fitness programs and no informal sporting programs such as open basketball courts," Jordan said.

At the time, OU was involved in Division II Athletics and the Lepley Sports Center was, as Jordan said, the equivalent of a small high school gym. There was a basketball court, locker rooms, a weight room and multi-purpose room. As the OU administration began eyeing a move to Division I Athletics, it was decided that it was important to enhance the athletics facility as well.

According to Jordan, everything on the Recreation Center side of the building is new construction, except the racquetball courts. The O'rena doubled in size and the new Aquatics Center was installed. Jordan said the O'rena locker rooms were enhanced as well as office space and training facilities.

The facility has flourish. According to Jordan, more than 350,000 people use the Rec Center annually, bringing the total number of visitors to 2.5 to 3 million.

"Student support was originally approved at \$95 per semester, but a year before the Rec Center opened, the fee was reduced by \$20 to \$75 per semester. In winter 2006, that fee was absorbed into tuition. The student support provides for 83 percent of the Rec Center budget. The rest comes from facility rentals and memberships," Jordan said.

The Rec Center offers a weight room with more than 100 pieces of exercise equipment, a 50-meter pool, diving well, spa, wooden-floor gym with three courts for basketball, volleyball and badminton, three racquetball courts, one squash court, a four-lane indoor track, table tennis facilities, activity center, multipurpose rooms, social lounge, conference and meeting room space, locker rooms, fitness classes, certified personal trainers, massage therapy and intramural sports.

While an invitation-only event will be held for select members in September, the campus community is invited to a 10th anniversary celebration tailgate before the seventh annual flag football game between Campus Recreation and University House on Thursday, Sept. 11. The tailgate will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. on the Upper Fields, followed by the flag football match-up at 8 p.m. under the lights of the Upper Fields. During the tailgate there will be free hot dogs, games, inflatables and a climbing wall. Throughout the week, Campus Recreation will also have giveaways at the Rec Center.

For more information on OU's Rec Center, including a virtual tour and a list of programs available through Campus Recreation, visit the **Rec Center** Web site.



The Rec Center ribbon cutting took place in 1998.



The Rec Center has welcomed more than 2.5 million visitors since it opened in 1998.

SUMMARY

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