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FEATURED

Billings YMCA preschoolers get a peek at family locker room construction zone

By MIKE FERGUSON mferguson@billingsgazette.com Updated Jan 25, 2016



BOB ZELLAR/Gazette Staff

Langlas and Associates superintendent Lane Huffman talks to preschool children Friday during a tour of the Family renovation at the Billings Family YMCA.

About two dozen hardhat-wearing, pajama-clad preschoolers showed up at Lane Huffman's work site Friday morning.

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Huffman, superintendent at Langlas & Associates, was delighted to greet those who might after all one day find themselves in construction work. He even provided the 3- and 4-year-olds who attend preschool at the Billings Family YMCA with colorful toy hardhats, each one stamped with the Y's logo.

"We have just three rules around here," Huffman told the preschoolers. "I tell my guys to be safe, have fun and be strong."

The children have been curious, said their teacher Shannon George, the Y's youth development director, about progress being made at the Scheels Family Locker Room over the past two weeks.

That's why Huffman stepped in to offer a tour of what is for now just demolition work. Langlas & Associates, the project's general contractor, will begin constructing the \$1 million facility after securing a building permit.

Children came to the YMCA preschool Friday dressed in their pajamas because they've been studying the letter "P" this week. Present in their PJ's, they also popped popcorn into their mouths, their teachers said.

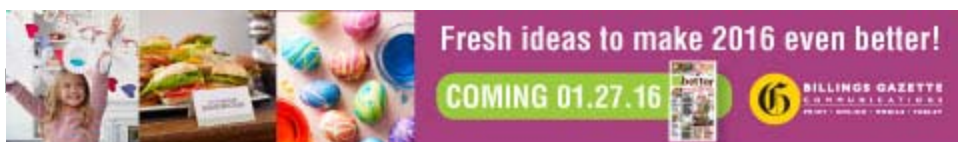
The Family Locker Room project is scheduled for completion by June, said Kim Kaiser, Billings YMCA's chief executive officer.

To date the YMCA has raised 80 percent of the \$1 million to build the new facility, including a donation of \$333,333.33 from Scheels and \$150,000 from the Fortin Foundation.

Kaiser said she's optimistic that the Y can raise the needed \$200,000 by project completion in June.

"Remember this room?" Huffman asked the children, stepping into one of the rare demolition areas without dirt on the floor.

"It used to



"That's right," Huffman said. "Last Friday I was pouring concrete right here."

Along a corridor, Huffman pointed to a regular-sized wheelbarrow, asking children what it's used for.

After they'd answered, he motioned at three roll carts that dwarfed the wheelbarrow.

"My guys are so big and strong, they can fill these things up with dirt and garbage," Huffman told the wide-eyed preschoolers. "You kids — boys and girls — will grow up to be big and strong too."

Kaiser said that changing Y membership makes a family locker room — with multiple cabanas for changing clothes and showering — more desirable. About one-third of the Billings YMCA's 15,000 members have family memberships, she said.

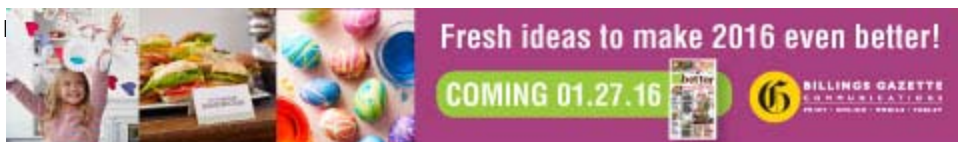
Some of the Family Locker Room fixtures, including sinks, chairs and the lockers themselves, will be pint-sized and low to the ground, with children about the same size as Friday's preschoolers in mind.

"It's going to be kid-friendly and (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant," Kaiser said.

The work is being timed for completion by the opening of the Y's summer camp, which last year attracted more than 400 children each week.

Recent growth at the YMCA may also point to the need for upgraded, larger facilities. In January alone, 400 people signed up for a membership. The waiting list for the YMCA's after-school program stands at 60, a problem mirrored at other facilities around town, Kaiser noted.

YMCA spokesman Corby Skinner said the Family Locker Room will also better serve another changing demographic at the YMCA: grandparents who bring their grandchild



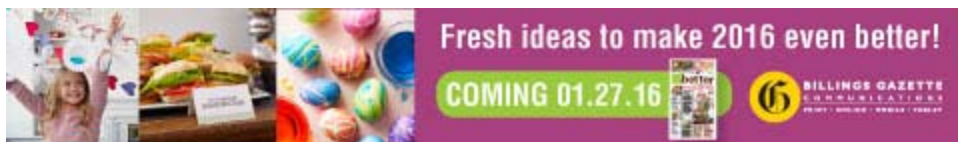
"We see so many grandparents here," many with grandchildren of the opposite sex, he said. The new locker space will also make swimming lesson changes easier to accomplish, since it's a short walk from the new space to the YMCA's indoor pool.

The Family Locker Room will have five private cabanas and five smaller changing rooms, up from two in the previous facility.

"We want to plan for everyone," Kaiser said.



New YMCA CEO Kim Kaiser settling in and rolling up her sleeves





YMCA overhaul continues; Scheels commits \$333K matching donation

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YMCA's new locker room renovation in full swing

An advertisement for the Billings Gazette Community Edition. It features a collage of images on the left: a child with arms raised, a display of colorful Easter eggs, and a basket of fruit. To the right of the images, the text reads "Fresh ideas to make 2016 even better!" and "COMING 01.27.16". Below this is a small image of the newspaper cover and the Billings Gazette logo, which includes the text "BILLINGS GAZETTE COMMUNITY EDITION" and "PRINT • ONLINE • MOBILE • TABLET".





YMCA announces \$2.5 million capital campaign, kicks off locker room renovation

Mike Ferguson

City reporter for The Billings Gazette.

A collage of images showing a child, a display of colorful Easter eggs, and a sign that says "Fresh ideas to make 2016 even better!".

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