

# World Class Fitness Center Opens at National Medical Center

In accordance with the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) directives, the Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC) and the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) have merged to create The Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) – a tri-service military medical center in Bethesda, Md.

To help meet the fitness needs of this unique community, a new Warrior Support Complex fitness center officially opened on Sept. 22.

The \$22 million, 45,000-square-foot facility offers a 50-meter, Olympic size indoor pool, high-end fitness equipment areas, an elevated indoor running track, an NBA/NCAA regulation-sized basketball court, group exercise rooms, a spinning room, racquetball courts and locker rooms, as well as a wealth of programs and services to meet the needs of those of all abilities.

“The thing we are most proud is the fact that we are able to offer the things that we have,” says Recreation Director Wendy Tompkins. “Once we were sitting down during the planning process and discussing what our focus would be, especially with all of our wounded warriors that were coming here, we

wanted to make sure that everyone would be comfortable using the facility and that we had as many amenities as possible with the space available. And I think we succeeded.”

So far, patronage has tripled from about 350 people per day at the previous location to about 1,000 per day in the new facility.

Tompkins notes that WRNMMC Quality of Life Director Bob Killion has been instrumental in helping with its growth. “He’s a big part of what we’ve accomplished here. We’re glad to be here and able to offer the services that we have.”

## **FITNESS FIRST**

The cardio and weight areas in the facility offer top-of-the-line equipment from Life Fitness, including on the cardio side: treadmills, cross trainers, steppers, elliptical machines, recumbent and upright bikes – all PRT certified and equipped with TVs. On the strength side, the facility uses the Life Fitness Signature line of plate-loaded equipment.

“We have been working for Life Fitness since I’ve been working here for 13 years,” says Tompkins. “And we have



Rear Adm. Matthew Nathan, left, commander of the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) Bethesda, at the time, discusses details of the new Warrior Support Complex with Vice Adm. John Bird, director of Navy Staff.

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found that it accommodates both men and women – as opposed to other equipment that tends to be too long for women. It is also very sturdy and safe, which is why we decided on the Signature line. It is one of the best lines and has great feedback on utilization for both men and women.”

The black-lit Spin Room features Star Trac Spinner Pros and two 60-inch TVs that work in conjunction with a Zephyr system, allowing riders to see their heart rate, oxygen intake, breathing rate and calories burned.

The facility also offers free equipment orientations for anyone as well as free personal training – excellent resources for those looking to start a regimen for the first time, says Tompkins.

In addition to the personal training and equipment orientations, the group exercise room offers classes such as BodyPump, BodyFlow and BodyCombat from Les Mills, as well as step, yoga, boot camp and others. The newest class, Kangoo, offers a fun, low-impact fitness workout using spring boots. “It is ideal for people with bad knees or who have had back injuries,” notes Tompkins.

BodyPump continues to be the “most popular class, and it provides 45 minutes of a full body workout using weight training,” she adds. “We’ve been using Les Mills for three years now and the classes are popular and well attended.”

Intramural sports is an integral part of programming as well, and includes basketball, softball, volleyball, kickball, indoor soccer and indoor wheelchair flag football, to name just a few. The multipurpose gymnasium is used for intramural and open play as well as functions and physical training.

On the aquatic side, the 50-meter, Olympic-size pool offers aqua aerobics, and recreation therapists work with wounded warriors to do a lot of therapeutic activities in the pool. In addition, Team River Runner comes over with canoes and kayaks to work with wounded warriors as well. The pool has two electronic pool lifts and wheelchair accessible pool ramps, as well as a waterproof wheelchair available to accommodate wounded warriors.



## MWR Holds Grand Opening Celebration

To celebrate the grand opening on Sept. 22, Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) staff held a Fit Challenge and “Fun Palooza” in the state-of-the-art gymnasium.

Events included basketball scrimmages for wounded warriors, fitness demonstrations and a blood drive, as well as food and prizes.

“Battling it out on the basketball court were AMP1, the first organized stand-up amputee basketball team in the country, and the hospital staff,” says Tompkins. “WNBA Washington Mystics’ forward/center Crystal Langhorne, from the University of Maryland, was the honorary coach for the hospital staff team.”

The USO, the Washington Redskins cheerleaders and staff from Information, Tickets & Technology (ITT) were also in attendance for the Fun Palooza.

The Fit Challenge included TRX suspension fitness training, and Kangoo, a fitness workout that utilizes spring boots. There were also 5-K runs, a half-mile swim challenge, an 8-mile spin bike ride, and a wheelchair basketball scrimmage.

“We’re very proud of the variety of things we offer,” Tompkins says. “And this event allowed us to show the community what is now available to them in this incredible new facility.”



“We’re very proud of the variety of things we offer,” says Tompkins. “We are also getting ready to start a class to work with our Department of Defense (DoD) dependent children focusing on teen obesity.”

## ADAPTIVE PROGRAMS

Tompkins points out that the fitness center was conceived and designed with wounded warriors in mind. “We have very few pieces of equipment that someone in a wheelchair can’t use,” she notes. “About 90 percent of the equipment we have was chosen because of that reason.”

To increase offerings for wounded warriors, a Paralympic group comes to the fitness center to run everything from sitting volleyball to wheelchair basketball.

“We are also getting ready to start a wheelchair flag football league indoors,” she notes. “We have numerous activities that people of any ability can participate in. We basically have joined with the Paralympic group – and the physical readiness training (PRT) department that transferred over from Walter Reed – to make sure that all the programs that they were participating in at Walter Reed they are continuing over here as well.”

Tompkins says her main goal right now is to become a host site for the Paralympic Warrior Games. “We are working closely with the Paralympic group right now to make that happen and focusing more on the pool side of things, because we have such a beautiful pool here, and it would be a great setting for the Games.”

Overall, the transition through the BRAC process has been “very easy,” she says. “It was a matter of communicating with the right departments, staying on the same page in understanding what each department needs.”

Staff members have come together toward one goal, she says, and the facility provides certified personal trainers during all hours of operation to cater to any fitness need.

“If there is something that is needed on the therapy side, it has to come from the hospital stating they are able to do the programs that we offer here,” notes Tompkins. “Once they are referred to us, we can work with them.”

Personal trainers handle all of the fitness assessments in a dedicated room. “It has been very helpful to our PRT department, and our active duty members who come over from our Fitness Enhancement Program (FEP),” she notes. “We have helped and assisted them in passing their PRT exam.”

Since its opening, feedback on the new facility has only been positive.

“We now have a state-of-the-art facility and everyone is very appreciative of it,” notes Tompkins. “As we get settled and things start to move more smoothly, we will continue to stay open to new ideas and programs that come our way.”

—GRF