

LOCAL

Taking care of the temple: Marion church's wellness and fitness campus open to the public



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Members of a church on Marion's northwest side hope their newest project will have a positive effect on the neighborhood they serve.

Logos Christian Ministries unveiled its new wellness and fitness campus during an open house held last Saturday. The campus, located on church property adjacent to its main facility at 582 Lee St. in Marion, features a 1/8-mile long walking track, basketball court, gazebo, two fire pits, and several benches.

Rev. Jackie Peterson of Logos Christian Ministries said the development of the wellness and fitness campus is just another way her congregation is reaching out to the neighborhood where it's located and the greater Marion area.

"We as a church like to give back to the community," said Peterson, who's been pastor at Logos since 2009. "We had this property next to the church that we had purchased from a wonderful family and we were thinking of ways we could use it to serve people in Marion, and not just our own church members. So we came up with the idea of the wellness and fitness campus. We approached the Marion Community Foundation along with OhioHealth and Marion Public Health to see if they would partner with us to make this a reality."

Peterson said she hopes folks who live on Lee Street and surrounding neighborhoods will enjoy the park.

"The west side (of Marion) just needs a little tender loving care. I believe in taking care of the temple, the whole man. Not only can people get exercise, but we have a gazebo where they can relax, meditate, whatever," Peterson added. "We have several benches around the track where people can take a break and just enjoy the scenery. And it gives the kids in the neighborhood a safe place to play and they don't have to play in the street."

OhioHealth partners with Logos to address health inequities

Curtis Gingrich, president of OhioHealth Marion General Hospital, said OhioHealth has been focused on addressing health inequities in Marion County and was glad to partner with Logos Christian Ministries to create the wellness and fitness campus. Gingrich said he hopes OhioHealth can partner with other groups around Marion County on similar efforts.

"It's a piece that we're trying to figure out. Rather than just be the hospital on the south side of town, we're looking into more ways to connect into the community, especially in those areas that don't have healthcare facilities," Gingrich said. "So we're looking into ways to provide programs and partnerships with various groups to improve the health of the community."

Former neighbor pleased with new campus

Earl Simpkins III, son of Earl and Lilie Simpkins Jr., was born on the property at 600 Lee St. where the new campus is located. Simpkins, who now lives in Delta in northwest Ohio, said his parents developed a positive relationship with Logos church members over the years, which eventually paved the way for the congregation to acquire the property.

"There was an elderly man - I don't recall his name, but I always called him 'Uncle' - and when I couldn't get here, if it snowed, he would clear my parents' sidewalks when he cleared the church," Simpkins said. "In the summertime, it was the same

the grass at the church. He became a very good friend and the church treated them very well. Jackie did my mom's funeral when she passed."

Simpkins attended the open house for the wellness and fitness park last Saturday. He said he was pleased to see his parents' former property being used for a positive purpose.

"The church used to ask mom and dad if they could use the lot for food giveaways," Simpkins recalled. "They were always very respectful and always cleaned up when they were done. I thought they might use it for more parking, but I'm really glad to see what they've done with it. It's very nice."

Peterson said that the fresh produce pantry the church hosts will be moved to the wellness and fitness campus, weather permitting. The food pantry is offered on the third Saturday of the month from April through December.

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