Written by Ryan T. Scott
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The North Community YMCA has been revamped with the success and engagement of the North Minneapolis community youth in mind. For over 150 years, the YMCA has proven to be the savior for many wandering youth, and at the Grand Opening Celebration on May 2 one of those youth, Fred Friswold, had a YMCA building named after him for all that he has given back to the community.

Friswold, the YMCA "Commitment to Community" Campaign Chair, led the cause of donors and organizers in rebuilding the North Community YMCA because of what the YMCA did for him as a youth. "This is my city. I grew up on these streets. The YMCA helped make a difference in my life. I hope that this building can make a few children's growing up experience a little more enjoyable and less painful," he said.

One of the youth speakers at the Grand Opening let the words "There's not much to do around here" slip out as she innocently spoke. Whether that is true or not, this new YMCA Youth and Teen Enrichment Center provides a quick and potent fix to the notion of there not being enough choices for Northside youth.

The programs of the North Community YMCA Youth and Teen Enrichment Center are geared to gain the attention of youth, no matter what their interests are. Naturally sports-focused programming, including swimming, is heavily available, but programs also extend to media (television, radio, or print) training, photography, dance, acting, computers, cooking, and much more. "You can count on exciting programs, great services and a place in your neighborhood where you belong," says Youth Program Director Nichole Mundis.

One of the central highlights of the revamped YMCA site is the XRKADE Interactive Game Center. The XRKADE "is a cutting edge total environment and experience complete with the most advanced active gaming and entertainment systems…" states the informational brochure. The combination of computerized games and physical activity is on the verge of widespread implementation as a means towards youth health engagement, and thus the XRKADE Interactive Game Center provides a major opportunity to help kids understand the changing digital world, while keeping in touch with general principles of physical health. In addition, kids learn about the games they are playing (baseball, tennis, boxing, fishing, dance, and more…) and likely will get an idea or two towards creating the games of the future.

The staff of the new North Community YMCA Youth and Teen Enrichment Center is a strong multi-cultural group of leaders with Henry Crosby serving as Executive Director, DeAnna Smith as Aquatics, Health & Wellness Director, and Nichole Mundis as Youth Program Director. Serving above them is Harold Mezile, President and CEO of YMCA of Metropolitan Minneapolis. "This is the dawn of a new day in the Northside. We want to make this building a beacon of hope, and will constantly keep looking for new ways to make a difference," said Mezile.

The Northside Community YMCA is rebuilt, and re-opened for business as a progressive Youth and Teen Enrichment Center. It would seem mandatory that all neighborhood parents (and all adults in general) learn more about their programming and leadership in order to protect the Northside youth from the curious, negative, media images that don't truly represent the talent

and promise that Northside youth possess.

For further information on the North Community YMCA Youth and Teen Enrichment Center call (612) 588-9484 or see www.ymcayouthcenter.org