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Fit Floors

Southtowns Family YMCA in West Seneca, N.Y.

By Emily Tipping

YMCA Buffalo Niagara was established in 1852, making it the second oldest YMCA in the United States. It currently operates seven branches and two camps in Western New York, including the Southtowns facility, which opened in West Seneca in 2003.

Fitness and wellness programs are an important part of the YMCAs mission across the country, and the Southtowns Family YMCA is no exception. More than 18,000 members visit the facility, making it quite active and busy, according to Brian Byrne, corporate properties manager for YMCA Buffalo Niagara.

"The Southtowns facility has a combination of cardio fitness with circuit trainers and a free weight area," Byrne said. "It's about 8,000 square feet."

Between the heavy traffic, the bitter winter weather and other challenges, the five-year-old flooring—a combination of carpet in the cardio area and composite flooring in the free-weight area—had taken a beating and was showing some wear and tear.

"The existing rubber floor and carpet was wearing out and starting to look bad," said George Atkinson of Infinity Flooring, "but another major issue was sound."

Located on the second floor of the Southtowns facility, the existing flooring in the cardio and free weight area was inadequate for keeping things quiet for patrons taking part in childcare and other programs on the floor below.

"Any time someone would run on the treadmills, drop a weight or lower a weight stack, you'd hear it downstairs," Atkinson added.

With this combination of issues driving the YMCA to replace the flooring, Byrne said they had to make a decision: Should they replace the carpet with more carpet, or look for a more high-tech solution?

He said the YMCA contacted Infinity Flooring and got plenty of references, mainly from big-name colleges and campuses, and mostly for free-weight areas.

"It seemed to be the answer to our troubles," Byrne said. "It comes in 2-foot by 2-foot squares, and there's three dowels on each side of the square that lock into each other, so if a tile were to get damaged you can just replace the one tile instead of the whole floor."

One of the considerations regarding purchasing this product was that it was slightly more expensive, but Byrne said over the long term, the new floor's durability will make the investment well worth it.

Another challenge they faced was that the YMCA had to remain open for use by members while the new floor was being installed. Because the floor is made up of tiles, the installation process was simplified.

"The facility needed to remain open, not inconvenience anyone and ensure the safety of our members," Byrne said.

The project began on Dec. 1 and was completed in just two weeks. The facility remained open virtually this entire time by moving equipment to one side, as well as moving equipment to an auxiliary gym on the first floor. The free weight area proved to be more of a challenge as the existing floor was more difficult to remove.

"It was a bear to get out of there," Byrne said. "But we did it all in about two weeks, with very little inconvenience to our members."

Ultimately, the Southtowns Family YMCA replaced its carpet and composite flooring with around 8,000 square feet of the 1-inch thick tiles, including a custom logo.

"It gave us the flexibility we wanted, as well as the durability," Byrne said. And the bonus? "It's a much thicker product, so it's sound-deadening."

Now the folks below the workout area don't hear every detail of what's going on above them. "It completely soundproofed the upstairs from the downstairs," Atkinson said. "Because it's 1-inch thick and rubber, it absorbs the impact of all the weights and cardio equipment."

What's more, the new flooring gives the facility a bright, pleasant appearance. According to YMCA Buffalo Niagara communications director Kathy Vallone, the reports are in, and "people are pleased with not only the look but the feel of the new flooring."

"One of the advantages without the carpet is the space looks bigger because the tiles are two-by-two and they're all aligned symmetrically," Byrne said. "It just looks better."

The new floor's thickness also adds up to a more comfortable workout area, he added. "It's comfortable to work out on because it's 1-inch thick, so it's beneficial to those individuals with bad knees and bad backs," he explained.

And finally, solving a common problem in wintry areas, where salt and snow tend to get on every surface, the floor is easy to clean with the use of a Roto Wash machine, said Southtowns facility director Gregg Schaper. Byrne and the YMCA are pleased with the end result, from the ease of the installment to the ease of cleaning.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Southtowns Family YMCA:
www.ymcabuffaloniagara.org

Infinity Flooring:
www.infinityflooring.com

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