

BEST OF
2007
AWARDS

Charlean and Wayland Blood Fitness & Dance Center

PROJECT OF THE YEAR: Sports Facilities

Hamilton College's Saunders Hall of Chemistry had a long history and a central role on the school's campus in Clinton, N.Y. Built in the 1880s, and later expanded and recast in the 1930s and 1970s for new uses, the building had served its purpose over the years as an academic hall.

But Hamilton's leaders decided the building needed an upgrade to serve a new purpose – a conversion into a fitness center and campus focal point. Along the way, the college and its project team also executed an intricate historic restoration and preservation effort. Their work on the \$9.2 million adaptive reuse project garnered the team a Best of 2007 award as the best Sports Facility project from the jury.

The college made a statement with its commitment not only to sustainable construction techniques but also its thoughtful reuse and preservation of an existing campus feature, says Robert Vuyosevich, partner at New York-based Butler Rogers Baskett, the project's architect.

"There's a link between the college reinforcing the message that personal wellness and fitness should be significant to the campus community and its decision to put a focus on sustainability – the wellness of its capital stock," he adds. "Even though we weren't thinking about it when we were planning the project, these two ideas came together."

The 29,000-sq-ft project broke ground in November 2005 and finished exactly one year later. The fitness center it resulted in is now used on a regular basis by three-quarters of people on the campus, including 400 visitors a day. They have access not only to gym staples such as resistance and weight-lifting machines, equipment for aerobic/cardio training, and free weights, but also a 40-ft-high climbing wall, dance studio, juice bar, locker facilities, and facul-



ty offices for the athletic department.

The center is open to the 1,800 students on campus – both collegiate athletes and recreational users – as well as to the faculty and other staff. It also consolidates programs that had been scattered across the campus for fitness, wellness, dance, outdoor recreation, physical education, club sports, and other student activities.

In a broader sense, the new building also has become a campus icon that captures the college's history through architectural elements from the original 1880s structure, the 20th Century additions, and the present. All three eras merge in a stone and glass atrium.

The project team collaborated early on with college leaders to develop a strategy to accommodate the fitness and athletic programs at the school. They also took advantage of the completion of a new science building elsewhere on campus in 2005, which freed up Saunders Hall for work to begin.

Early decisions played a big role in >>

Key Players

Owner: Hamilton College, Clinton, N.Y.

Architect: Butler Rogers Baskett, New York

Structural Engineer: Hage Engineering, New York

Mechanical Engineer: Werner Tietjen, PE, Rye, N.Y.

Civil-Site Engineer: Saratoga Associates, Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Construction Manager: Barr & Barr, Inc. Builders, Clinton

Architectural Millwork: Anthony Galluzzo Corp., Londonderry, N.H.

Ceramic Tile-Stone: Dick Tile & Marble, Utica, N.Y.

Electrical: Huen New York, East Syracuse, N.Y.

HVAC: H.J. Brandeles Corp., Utica

Roofing: Charles F. Evans Co., Elmira, N.Y.

Sitework: Fred Burrows Trucking & Excavating, Whitesboro, N.Y.

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keeping the project on track, such as the decision to pre-purchase the climbing wall, HVAC equipment, and fitness equipment.

But the team, which featured Barr & Barr Inc. Builders of Clinton as construction manager, still faced significant hurdles at the early stages. One early task was the need to carefully document the existing structural and space programming of the building, as well as the execution of coordinated design studies by the structural, mechanical-electrical, and architectural design team members.

In many cases, they had to figure out what were parts of the original Romanesque-style classroom building dating to the 1880's, and which were parts of the major transformation from the 1930's that added two wings and created a new façade in the then-popular Collegiate Gothic style. Yet another conversion in 1978 led to the

building's use as a science hall - and featured the addition of a new three-story shed housing mechanical equipment in the rear courtyard.

The team's study delved into decisions about what parts of the structure to salvage, what to remove, and how to introduce necessary upgrades to the building envelope and mechanical systems.

One of the biggest changes was removal of the courtyard shed, which had partly obscured the building's features. By removing the shed, the project team was able to convert the former rear courtyard into a three-story atrium, which now houses not only the 40-ft climbing wall, but also cardio-vascular equipment on two levels and locker rooms in the basement. Similarly, the team transformed the two wings that once housed classrooms and laboratories into large rooms for dance, multi-purpose

use, and weight lifting.

One of the project's most delicate tasks was restoring the stone façades, which showed wear and tear, especially near the mechanical shed and in places where ducts and piping penetrated the old walls. The team employed careful masonry techniques to reconstruct and restore the original walls. It also restored old arched openings and patched sections of wall that had been removed in previous projects.

"The new Blood Fitness Center has transformed campus life," wrote Karen Leach, Hamilton's vice president for administration and finance, in a letter she sent to the Society for College and University Planning in Ann Arbor, Mich., earlier this year. "It has become an active, inviting, central, multi-use space that gracefully reflects Hamilton's long history." <<

