

THE GOAL

Issue 1 – 2023

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As a young pilot stationed in New Guinea in 1944, Mansfield native Jim Gorman could find few places to spend his U.S. Army paycheck.

"There was nothing but jungle so I decided to send my paychecks home to my dad." With the money, Jim included instructions for his dad to buy something with it instead of allowing it to just sit in the bank.

"He bought me a farm on Route 97 in Bellville. Of course, it wasn't Bellville then," he remembered.

The ground proved to be ideal for growing potatoes. "It's all underlain with gravel, so it drains perfectly. For years, potatoes were grown there, and one of our biggest customers was the Kroger Company."

Eventually, the State of Ohio decided to put Interstate 71 through Jim's stretch of land. "They put the highway catty-cornered through the farm, which eliminated the growing of potatoes or anything else.

"We didn't plan it this way, but I'm glad that we ended up with the property that the YMCA needed. The Bellville community as a whole has been great for our family, and I felt maybe it was time to give back a little and say thank you.

"I think it will be great for the children. The way I look at it is the land will go from growing potatoes to growing young people," Jim Gorman said.

Although we are in the early stages of executing our funding strategy, I want to highlight and thank the diverse cross section of support we have received from families, businesses and other local organizations. Early support from this dynamic donor network affirms community commitment and desire to see this project succeed. On behalf of the YMCA board and staff, I want to express our collective gratitude to everyone who has committed to sending support so far to our funding campaign.



Rick Roby is Executive Vice President and partner at RFME Insurance and serves as Chief Volunteer Officer for the board of the YMCA of North Central Ohio

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Deeply rooted in the community, the YMCA of North Central Ohio has served Richland County and surrounding areas for over 155 years. The YMCA is a community of people dedicated to serving others, nurturing children, and encouraging healthy lifestyles in spirit, mind, and body.

As a leader and partner in our ever-changing community, the YMCA of NCO seeks to be the preeminent community hub providing programs that serve youth, families, and older adults alike. To ensure that our Y is serving today's generation with an eye to the next, we need purposefully designed spaces to offer the types of programs and services that children and adults want and need. Our Y facilities are tools that help us deliver our mission, and major expansion is being planned.

After an extensive feasibility study in 2022, our Y committed to developing an indoor/outdoor sports complex in keeping with our mission to encourage all people, especially the young, to develop to their fullest potential.

Area youth, and the community, in general, will benefit greatly from the sports complex that will provide Olympic level training, coaching and competition, drawing thousands of players, coaches, families, and others to our area. The sports complex will create more than \$8 million in retail sales and tax revenues for Richland County and its citizens and businesses and provide significant economic development opportunities for our area. The sports complex also will be in close proximity to the hot growth market north of Columbus.

In order to raise funding for the construction and completion of the sports complex, and to provide future operational support, the Y has engaged C-Harris Development Consultants to create and implement a funding strategy that will cultivate financial opportunities and business relationships for the sports complex. In addition, Sara Baker, Y director of marketing and development, will manage an advertising platform including annual sponsorships, promotions, and special events to benefit the sports complex as well as the other two Y branches.

The 100,000-square-foot indoor sports center, to be built on land donated by Jim Gorman at Interstate 71 and Ohio Route 97, will feature soccer and an all-purpose area for other sports, such as basketball, volleyball, and pickle ball. An indoor track and outdoor walking trail are also planned. The complex will feature seven outdoor soccer fields (at least one with lights and a turf field), as well as parking zones and picnic areas for traveling tournament teams. We will also have an outdoor pavilion, play area, restrooms and at least one kiosk with tables and benches near our property's intersection with the B&O Bike Trail. Inside the sports center building will be an arcade, fitness center, apparel, food, and coffee vendors, including Nickel and Bean Coffee of Lexington. The new sports complex will be recognized as our Y's third branch while providing a sports training facility for our area's children.

In addition to traditional YMCA programs, we will provide a range of support for our members in their health care journey, offering a menu of programs such as Enhance Fitness®, Diabetes Prevention, Moving with Parkinson's, and LiveStrong® for cancer survivors.

Cristen Gilbert, Chief Executive Officer
YMCA OF NORTH CENTRAL OHIO



“The new sports complex will be recognized as our Y's third branch while providing a sports training facility for our area's children.”



Mayor Teri Brenkus believes the Clear Fork Valley sets the standard for community support of its students and athletes. She said that's the main reason "locals" are enthusiastic about the new YMCA sports complex.



"Our community of Bellville is excited about being chosen as the site for the sports complex. In the Clear Fork Valley, we're all about our students and our sports, and this facility

will be an enormous benefit to both. But we've found it's not just

kids who are interested, because we've had lots of calls from older residents asking if there will be a walking track and inquiring about pickle ball," she said.

As a young mother who said sports were an important outlet for her own children, Mayor Brenkus remembers driving them to events. "Every winter we drove back and forth to the indoor arena in Lodi so the kids could play soccer. There were no hotels nearby, so we had to drive back home after the games. (That Lodi sports center) was always packed, and I constantly worried about the traffic while keeping one eye on the weather."

Developers are considering the Interstate 71 Bellville exchange for housing, retail, restaurants and hotels, and Mayor Brenkus knows work needs to be done to accommodate more traffic. "We are already working with engineers to redesign the traffic flow. By the time the YMCA sports complex is open, the added challenges will already have been addressed."

Teri Brenkus is Mayor of Bellville



Richland County Commissioner Tony Vero describes the YMCA sports complex as a long-anticipated win for our communities and taxpayers as well.



"We've heard from residents for years that this type of facility would be an asset to our communities. We are

fortunate that the YMCA has made the investment of time, money, and the enormous effort to make this happen," Commissioner Vero said. "It's more than a sports complex, it is a major investment in our families and communities."

The site selected for this sports complex is definitely a good location to draw people to our area, Vero said. "The opportunities for growth and expansion will be especially transformational for Lexington and Bellville, and benefit Richland County and our north central Ohio region as a whole."

"The community's interest in and enthusiasm for the YMCA sports complex continues to be overwhelmingly positive."

Tony Vero is a Richland County Commissioner



Brian White became mayor of the Village of Lexington in 2020 after serving 19 years on village council. During that time, Mayor White has seen some growth in the village, and he expects to see more in the not-so-distant future.



“We are already experiencing some growth as Columbus residents have discovered our area. Excellent real estate prices and good schools have positioned us well as we are close to I-71. This makes Lexington attractive to prospective home buyers. The creation of a facility like the YMCA sports complex adds to the overall desirability of our local communities,” the mayor said.

Economic growth is desirable for every community. “It’s not just one municipality, but each one needs to be supportive as this YMCA project moves forward. Increased housing, retail development and tourism dollars are things that can benefit everyone when it is done right,” the Lexington mayor said.

“Facilities of this caliber create positive options for student athletes as well as growth potential for surrounding communities, and everyone needs to be a partner.”

Brian White is the Mayor of the Village of Lexington



I think the YMCA sports complex is something this area has needed for a while. It will be a good thing for young people and families. One of today’s biggest challenges seems to be to find things to do that will keep kids off their phones and video games. Year round sports, the ability to play indoors in all kinds of weather, will offer not just exercise but focus for young people.



It’s a good way to help keep them engaged and interested in positive things. Like so many things the YMCA does, the Sports Complex will be a creative and positive influence on young people.

Tim Theaker is Mayor of Mansfield



Destination Mansfield Richland County

As president of Destination Mansfield-Richland County, Lee Tasseff has led the tourism-based marketing and development operation for over 30 years, witnessing many changes in Mansfield and in Richland County over those three decades. He believes the Y sports complex project will result in regional growth and opportunity.



“We’ve raised our family here, and I can tell you as a dad, volunteer and coach, I am envious,” he said. “I coached our daughter and son in soccer for better than eight years. With our son, who played high school varsity soccer, we regularly traveled to indoor soccer facilities to train and compete. It’s something we had to commit to so that our kids could improve throughout the winter during their school team’s off-season. Having a facility like the one being developed, just 10 minutes down the road, would have been a huge benefit.”

In his professional capacity, Mr. Tasseff said the new sports complex off Interstate 71 and Ohio Route 97 can be a positive gateway for our community. “People using the Y sports complex are going to require food, gas, shopping, and, in some cases, hotel accommodations.

“This sports complex can be an introduction to all the things we have to offer in our area.” Mr. Tasseff believes the facility will help fuel growth in the southern part of the county over the next few years. “It certainly won’t be the last new project near that I-71 exit,” he added.

“This project is a healthy sign of community growth,” Mr. Tasseff said, “And it can only add to the number of people looking for financial and personal investment here.”

Lee Tasseff is President of Destination Mansfield, Richland County



Located near I-71 and State Route 97 in Bellville, the 100,000-square-foot indoor sports center, shown here in brown, will feature soccer and an all-purpose area for other sports, such as basketball, volleyball, and pickle ball. An indoor track and outdoor walking trail are also planned. The complex will feature seven outdoor soccer fields (at least one with lights and turf), as well as parking zones and picnic areas for traveling tournament teams, an outdoor pavilion, play area, restrooms and at least one kiosk near the intersection of our southern-most land with snacks, beverages, picnic tables and benches. This will be the Y’s third branch with traditional Y programs.

If anyone can establish and manage a sports complex in this area, Deijah Swihart is convinced it is the YMCA.

“I’m a product of the Y,” she said. “My earliest memories are of being in YMCA daycare. They didn’t just corral us in a room, they played games with us and took us to the playground and the pool. I made friends, and I think that’s where I learned my love for sports. The Y was an important part of my childhood. Even today, I still meet my grandfather at the Y on weekends to play racquetball.”

I’m a product of the Y.

Deijah played soccer at Clear Fork and was inducted into the Clear Fork Hall of Fame in 2021. She is the only Clear Fork Soccer All American. After playing soccer at Ashland University and semi pro soccer for the Columbus Eagles, Deijah became assistance coach for the AU Eagles’ women’s soccer team.

Deijah believes the YMCA sports complex will be an invaluable asset to the youth in our area. “Sports help kids develop long-lasting relationships and let them get away from life for a while. This facility can offer more youth programs and give kids another positive place to go.”

As a college coach, Deijah sees the sports complex as a place for soccer players to learn and grow. “The YMCA sports complex will give our students a chance to play year-round while bringing more players, more coaches, more competition and more attention to the sport. Once the Y starts to organize big tournaments, it could draw in college coaches to recruit. All of it right at our doorstep.”

Deijah Swihart is an assistant soccer coach for the women’s team at Ashland University



Photo by Allison Waltz-Boebel — Ashland University Photographer

Saving Grace Soccer Club

North central Ohio soccer clubs will greatly benefit from the new YMCA sports complex.





Kevin Foglesong owns and operates Saving Grace Soccer Club, an organization that trains players from ages 4 to 10 in a 3,000 square-foot barn near Lexington. Former captain of the Lexington High School boys' soccer team, captain of Duquesne University men's soccer team, and coach at Lexington and Mansfield Christian, Mr. Foglesong developed and coached the Marion County Special Olympics Soccer Program.

Getting kids involved at a young age is important.

"Getting kids involved at a young age is important," the coach said. "Team building, working as a unit and sportsmanship are important lessons to teach and learn, and it's a healthy way to get children off the couch and on their feet. Watching them develop into athletes is the greatest job in the world," he said.

Kevin believes the Y sports complex is a giant step in the right direction. "Right now, when the school season ends in October, most of our kids are shut out till spring. It halts their development, and they just can't compete with kids that play year-round. Some kids are fortunate to have parents who can take them to indoor soccer facilities around the state, but that requires dedication and often great sacrifice to do that. A facility like this in our own backyard gives all ages of players an opportunity to have fun and develop skills at a high level."

The prospect of being able to bring in college teams and other elite teams to play in soccer tournaments at the new sports complex "opens the door" for kids, Mr. Foglesong said. "The Y facility will open the door to many possibilities for our kids to enjoy and learn about the sport. It will be good for the development of players and coaches. The Y sports complex is a win-win for our area."

Kevin Foglesong owns the Saving Grace Soccer Club in Lexington

Photos by Shane Gearhart



Michelle Beare, the Mansfield Christian High School girls' soccer coach, has practiced her craft for 25 years. "I coach, my husband is a referee, and our three kids all play soccer. We've lived in multiple states, and I've had the chance to see and experience some amazing sports complexes. I'm thrilled to see the YMCA sports complex being built here, because I know firsthand how much a facility like this can mean to an area."

In addition to her regular schedule, Michelle also coaches club teams. "We are always looking for a place to play. The idea that we might actually be able to host a club-sponsored tournament is exciting. It would be something for us to have the home team advantage for a change," she said.

Right now, Coach Beare says it's a stretch to keep kids playing year round. "We play in the gym between basketball games, and we tap into any spaces that might be willing and able to accommodate us. Tight spaces and tight schedules make it a challenge to fill those winter months."

"I believe the YMCA sports complex can be an amazing addition to Richland County, and I'm looking forward to it with great expectations."

Michelle Beare teaches math at Mansfield Christian School and is the high school girls' soccer coach



I know firsthand how much a facility like this can mean to an area.

The Ashland County Community Foundation is privileged to hold the assets of a prominent Richland County family foundation fund, which has pledged \$1 million of support to jumpstart this important project. We know individuals of all ages in a multi-county region will benefit from this facility. We are pleased we could facilitate this generous gift on behalf of our donor.

**James M. Cutright, President and CEO
Ashland County Community Foundation**



Since our first grant in 1956 to support a new YMCA-YWCA building on Park Avenue West in Mansfield, the Richland County Foundation believes in the Y's mission to be an inclusive organization that nurtures area youth and promotes healthy living. The new sports complex in Bellville will expand the reach of the organization into southern Richland County. It will allow for economic growth from the hundreds of athletes and their families that are projected to visit the complex each year. We are pleased to partner with the Y and other community funders on this important campaign by donating \$500,000 to the cause.

**Brady Groves, President
Richland County Foundation**





Brittany Bechtel smiles as she describes her childhood in Bellville as ADIDAS – All Day I Dream About Soccer. Today she is a first grade teacher and the Clear Fork girls’ soccer coach.

As Clear Fork’s first All Ohio team member and an inductee to her high school’s Hall of Fame, this coach has watched the game of soccer grow and evolve, and her passion for the game has never wavered.

“Soccer was so new to the area when I started to play, my mom was our soccer coach, even though she worked at another school,” said Ms. Bechtel.

Brittany’s excitement about the YMCA sports complex is over the top. “When I think of all the travel and sacrifices that families make to allow their children to compete, I’m blown away by the prospect of having this facility here.

“This will bring top coaches and players to our area to compete, and it will boost the numbers and skills of local players. It’s also an opportunity to create club teams from all over. The growth potential at every level is enormous,” Coach Bechtel said.

Brittany Bechtel teaches first grade for Clear Fork Valley Local Schools and is the Clear Fork High School girls’ soccer coach

When I think of all the travel and sacrifices that families make to allow their children to compete, I’m blown away by the prospect of having this facility here.



Stephen Armstrong, Ontario High School boys' soccer coach, has been coaching soccer for nearly 15 years at the high school and college levels, and said he has invested those years because he sees the bigger picture of what sports mean to young people. "For me, coaching is about mentorship and being a life coach and a leader," Mr. Armstrong said.

Coach Armstrong is enthusiastic about the YMCA sports complex and has a firsthand appreciation for what it will mean to a lot of young athletes. "Growing up, I didn't have the ability to get to sports events outside of the area where I lived. No club teams, no travel teams and no winter play. I'm not looking back and complaining, but having a facility like the Y is planning, right in this area, would have been a real game changer for a whole lot of kids."

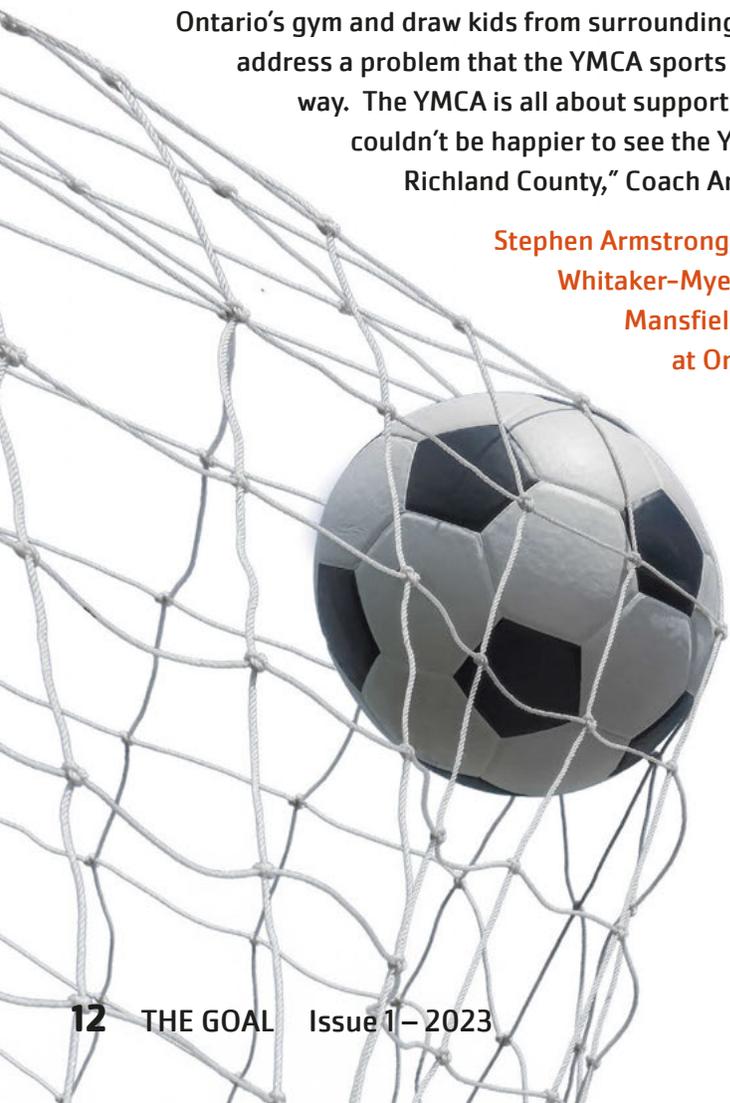
Finding ways to encourage players to work on conditioning, maintain fitness and continue to develop their soccer skills can be difficult in the winter months. "Not every player is a multi-sport athlete; some say, 'I don't want to wrestle or play basketball. I want to play soccer.'

"From experience, we know that kids can lose a lot of ground during the off-season, so, we've started having 'open gym' pick-up soccer games during the winter months at Ontario's gym and draw kids from surrounding schools. It's a smaller way to address a problem that the YMCA sports complex will address in a major way. The YMCA is all about supporting families and kids, and I couldn't be happier to see the Y bringing this facility to Richland County," Coach Armstrong said.

Stephen Armstrong is a financial advisor for Whitaker-Myers Wealth Managers, Ltd. in Mansfield and the boys' soccer coach at Ontario High School



Growing up, I didn't have the ability to get to sports events outside of the area where I lived.



Bryan DeBolt describes coaching varsity soccer at Mansfield Senior High School as challenging and rewarding. “I love working with these kids.”

The prospect of having a facility so close, like the YMCA sports complex, will be a boost for soccer, in particular, and sports in general. “It is really challenging to keep kids engaged through the winter. Some will pick up other sports to stay in condition, but a lot do not. Many kids come to play soccer through the Appleseed Youth Soccer Association (AYSA), and it takes the efforts of a crew of supportive coaches to keep the kids together and the programs going. Currently, the closest indoor soccer facility is one hour away. That kind of transportation requirement can be insurmountable for some kids,” Coach DeBolt said.

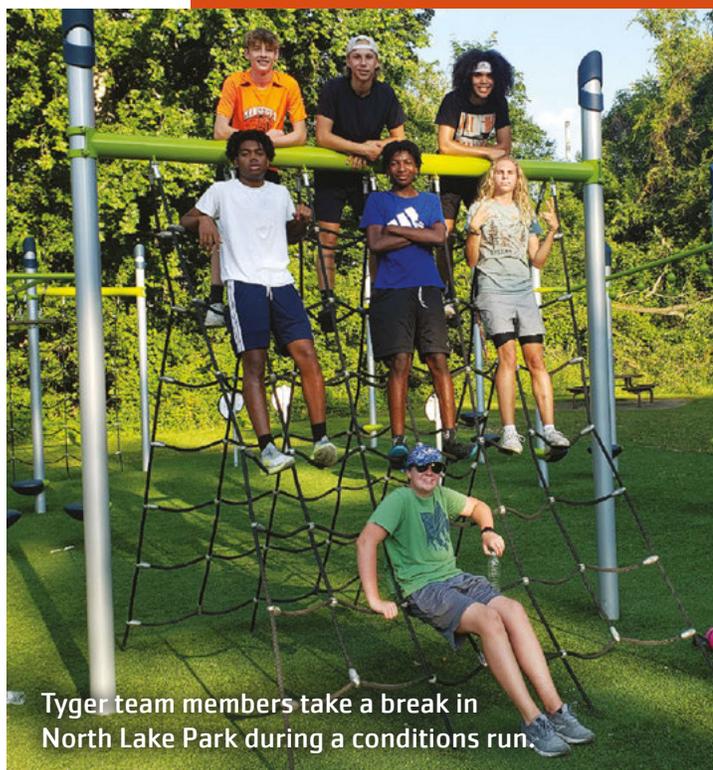
“Having an indoor site in our own backyard will benefit more players. This will open the door for players of all levels to develop their skills and play year round. And not just for soccer players, but basketball, too. This will be a community asset.”

Coach DeBolt believes that the YMCA sports complex will be important for our area, because local sports are more important than ever. “Participating in sports is an important teaching tool to help young people understand and develop personal accountability, respect for their community and teammates, and their own skills. I tell my players, ‘If we leave the field today learning nothing but soccer, we’ve wasted our time.’ I’m trying to help these young boys become young men, the best young men they can be.”

Bryan DeBolt is a pharmacist at OhioHealth Mansfield Hospital and boys’ soccer coach at Mansfield Senior High School

If we leave the field today learning nothing but soccer, we’ve wasted our time.

In this first of three issues of *THE GOAL*, we talked to area coaches and officials about the proposed new facility and heard their thoughts on what it could bring to families, our local communities and businesses. Issue 2 will focus on the groundbreaking and construction, and the third issue will celebrate the likely 2025 completion of the YMCA sports complex.



Tyger team members take a break in North Lake Park during a conditions run.





As someone who has played and coached soccer at all levels, Pete Them, boys' soccer coach at Lexington High School, will be happy to see the YMCA sports complex open its doors.

"Accessibility is a really big deal," he said. "This facility holds great promise for multiple sports and multiple uses, and that flexibility will also give it longevity. I think once the sports complex concept has been presented to the people, the possibilities will be evident."

This facility holds great promise for multiple sports and multiple uses, and that flexibility will also give it longevity.

As a high school coach and the father of three girls, Coach Them said he tries to look at the broader picture and often finds himself wearing two hats. "When I'm wearing my coaching hat, I'm enthused about the opportunities the sports complex will bring to my students as they will be able to play year round and grow and develop as players.

"Switching to my Dad hat," Coach Them said, "I'm reminded that my daughters, whom I also coach, will have a chance to play year round without me driving nearly an hour up and an hour back to play at the closest indoor arena. To have a place like this so close to home will be a real asset for parents and players alike."

Pete Them is Assistant Finance Director for the Village of Lexington and the boys' soccer coach at Lexington High School



IMPACTS OF THE SPORTS COMPLEX

In 2022, the YMCA formed an executive committee to study the economic impacts of creating a 100,000-square-foot indoor sports center with seven outdoor fields, a walking trail, and other amenities for visitors and residents alike.

For many reasons, the YMCA of North Central Ohio decided to create this major sports complex, a \$22 million cornerstone of development planned for southern Richland County. The decision to move forward was based on the following:



- The sports complex will serve unmet need; **there are no nearby facilities**. Local families drive at least an hour for their children to take advantage of high-level soccer competition and training. The Y also envisions hosting pickle ball play and multi-team competitions and collegiate-level volleyball tournaments.
- The results of a **community survey** in April 2022 suggested a great deal of interest and enthusiasm for this project. Of the respondents, 86 percent had children currently playing soccer and 78 percent participated in indoor soccer, most traveling at least an hour for weekly matches.
- Dr. Bill LaFayette, owner of Regionomics® LLC of Columbus, studied the **economic and local tax impacts** of the proposed sports facility and related visitor activities. He determined that the project would benefit Richland County by increasing economic activity and income and sustaining employment.
 - The construction will generate direct, indirect, and induced output (from production and spending) of \$32.9 million in Richland County. Household and business earnings are expected to total \$10 million, and 170 jobs in the county will be sustained. These impacts end when the construction ends.
 - Dr. LaFayette believes operating and visitor spending impacts, which will continue indefinitely, will include the following: Total annual output will increase by \$8.2 million and 100 jobs will be created or sustained. In addition, during construction and full operations, this project will also increase municipal and county income, sales, and lodging tax revenues.
- The YMCA of NCO is in a **strong financial position**, consistently growing its revenue and adding programs for our community and its residents, especially its youth. The new sports center building will become the YMCA's third branch, offering traditional Y programming to members in our county and beyond. A comprehensive readiness study was conducted to ensure the YMCA could handle the additional expense of operating a new third branch with the sports emphasis. This study showed a positive result, which will allow the YMCA to enhance existing programming and add more scholarship opportunities for the community.
- Once the decision to move forward was made by the YMCA, several alternative sites were considered for the project. **The Bellville site at Interstate 71 and State Route 97 was selected for its proximity to the interstate. Additionally, 35 acres of land were offered there as a gift by retired Mansfield industrialist and philanthropist Jim Gorman.**





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YMCA OF NORTH CENTRAL OHIO

2022 IMPACT REPORT

\$181,740 AWARDED in membership & program scholarships

\$145,402 AWARDED in child care assistance (48 Children and 38 Families)

284 FAMILIES awarded household scholarships

645 CHILDREN awarded youth scholarships

900 children gained confidence with every stroke in the YMCA Safety Around Water Program

2,823 children stayed active and engaged their brains in YMCA youth sports and youth programs

174,564 meals served to children in our Child Care centers

1,863 children served during the 10-week summer Y on the Fly visits



For more information or to provide financial support to the YMCA's sports complex, you may contact YMCA Consultant Chriss Harris at chrisharris@embarqmail.com or YMCA Marketing-Development Director Sara Baker at sbaker@ymcanco.org. More information on the YMCA sports complex can also be found on the Y's website at www.ymcanco.org/sports-complex.

Contributions for the sports complex can be made to the YMCA in care of
Y Sports Complex, 750 Scholl Road, Mansfield, OH 44907