



Music for the Soul

The Demakes Family YMCA in Lynn adds a brand-new Music & Performing Arts Center.

By Alexandra Pecci

FOR DECADES, YMCA programs have centered around athletics, from gym memberships and swimming lessons to basketball leagues and outdoor summer camps. Today, though, YMCAs are increasingly expanding their focus.

"Our commitment to youth development is so much deeper than that," says Kathleen M. Walsh, president and CEO of YMCA of Metro North. "It's about character building. It's about making friends. It's about preparing them to become adults."

Now the Demakes Family YMCA in Lynn is living up to that commitment with

the brand-new Music & Performing Arts Center, where young people can explore music, theater, podcasting, and other performance arts. It will also be home to the Empowering Youth Through Music program, developed in partnership with the Lynn Music Foundation, which aims to support the musical, academic, and social-emotional development of kids in Lynn from ages 2.9 to 18.

The 6,500-square-foot facility, which opened in December, includes a performance hall, digital music classroom, podcast suite, professional recording studio, practice rooms, student lounge, and an



The Demakes Family YMCA in Lynn has a brand-new performing arts center designed by SV Design.

instrument lending library. There's also performing arts programming, including free and low-cost music lessons, vocal training, theater classes, music technology and production workshops, early childhood music enrichment, and drop-in creative labs.

"It's a welcoming space, and it has features that you just can't find anywhere," Walsh says. "And the good news is, they're all under one roof."

The donor-funded Music & Performing Arts Center transformed what was previously the men's locker room in the old Lynn YMCA building.

Photographs by Hawk Visuals



"That was a dark space filled with metal lockers," Walsh says. "Now when you walk in, it is a bright space with high ceiling and beautiful natural light from the outside. It's extraordinary."

To achieve this transformation, YMCA of Metro North tapped SV Design, which needed to design an acoustically excellent space that was also welcoming and fun for kids. The layout also needed to consider other spaces that already existed elsewhere in the building.

"For instance, we couldn't put a performance space right underneath a childcare space," says Izabela Kennedy,

senior project manager for SV Design. "The functionality, the flow, and the strategic room placement were the primary drivers."

For instance, the design team strategically placed storage areas or corridors between spaces that generated

The center will become a hub for all types of creative outlets.

the most noise, like performance areas and practice rooms, to create buffer zones to minimize sound transfer. The team was also mindful of ductwork placement for sound purposes and constructed double walls to separate rooms with an air gap between them to stop noise from traveling.

When it came to interior design, the team combined aesthetics with comfort and functionality. The gray and white base colors in each room were accented with pops of neon green, yellow, orange, and blue. Exterior-grade furniture ensured durability, while fun decorative touches, like a wall adorned with vinyl records, give the space an additional cool factor.

Functionality is also built in. A recessed wall is filled with multicolored cubes that are not only a decorative wall element but can also be removed and disassembled to use as extra seating or even put together on the floor to make a miniature stage. Guitars, percussion, and horns for kids to borrow and use are displayed on a wall against pegboards in the Colcord Family Charitable Fund Lending Library. Sleek chairs, acoustic panels on the walls and ceilings, and other details marry form and function, creating a space built with kids in mind.

"We want to make sure they love coming and they want to be there," Kennedy says.

The Music & Performing Arts Center is the latest milestone in a phased reinvestment project for the Demakes Family YMCA campus in Lynn, which included opening the new Demakes Family YMCA building in 2021 and opening a rooftop teaching garden in 2023. The YMCA also recently acquired an adjacent building which it will turn into an outdoor sports and recreation complex.

Walsh hopes the Music & Performing Arts Center will become a hub for arts and performance, where kids can "do everything from a talent show to a fashion show to a poetry slam."

"We want kids to gain confidence, whatever that route is that they choose, not what is put on them as the only opportunity," she says. "We're trying to diversify opportunities, but we're staying within our lane of youth development." ymcаметronorth.org/svdesign.com