**New Hampshire YMCA Metal Building Leaves Visitors in Awe**

Liz Coppola calls it the “wow factor.” That’s the look of utter amazement on her client’s faces when they walk into the Keene Family YMCA in New Hampshire expecting a gym and, instead, get an architectural experience.

“Literally, there’s jaw dropping,” said Coppola, Director of Financial and Program Development for the Keene Family YMCA.

Inhabited now for two years, the custom metal structure rests on ten acres of a 40-acre plot of land only two and a half miles outside of the center of Keene, a town of 25,000.

“A project this size for a community our size really is unprecedented,” said Coppola. “Things like this don’t happen all the time in Keene, New Hampshire. It’s a once in a lifetime project.”

The project turned out to be a 65,000 square-foot structure that would house an aquatic center with two pools, a 5,800 square-foot wellness center, a gymnastics center, a suspended track stretching 1/12th of a mile, a group exercise room, six classrooms, two racquetball courts, locker rooms, and a 32-foot climbing wall, all housed within a building that blends into the rural environment.

“It was built on land donated to the YMCA that happened to be old farmland,” said Gary Dayharsh of Dayharsh Companies, an authorized Star Building Systems builder. “It was the requirement of the town and of the donor that the design fit into the surroundings.”

That is how the barn that isn’t a barn came to be.

“I knew they wanted it to be a big red barn with big white trim. It had several breaks and angles in it so that it wasn’t one massive looking structure. So it was built in three segments, all connected,” explained Dayharsh.

The end result is a structure turning heads while they are crunching abs and bending knees. The members ooh and ah over the building as soon as they walk in the door, said Coppola.

However, it isn’t only catching the local eye.

The Keene YMCA Family building won a 2013 Facility of Merit Award by Athletic Business for being an outstanding example of sports and recreation facility architecture. The award was presented to Keene Family YMCA and the building architectural firm, Architectural Resources Cambridge, during an awards banquet in San Diego on November 21. It was also Star’s Recreational Building of the Year and Star’s Builder’s Choice Master Builder of the Year, both awarded in 2012.

“People love it,” said Coppola. “It’s open and welcoming and full of light. It’s just a beautiful, beautiful space.”

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