

STHS sports med center rivals college facility

By Kathryn Reed

High school or physical therapist's office? The latter is what it looks like, the former is what it is.

The newest building at South Tahoe High School is more like a medical facility than a traditional high school classroom. The professional nature of all of the recent construction at the school makes it look like a college campus, with equipment and programs that rival and surpass some businesses.

While all the equipment isn't in at the Sports Medicine building, it will be by the time the 2013-14 school year starts in August. (The school board is getting a tour of the site this afternoon before its regular meeting at 6pm.)



STHS sports med students will have a therapy pool as part of their learning experience. Photos/Kathryn Reed

When complete, this will wrap up the multi-year construction project at the school. This campus received the bulk of the \$64.5 million facilities bond that voters passed a few years

ago and that was subsequently matched with more than \$30 million in state grant funds.

While students who go through this career pathway could take enough classes to test to be a physical trainer at age 18, the slate of coursework is not solely for someone pursuing a career or college track related to sports medicine.

STHS Principal Ivone Larson says all of the specialty programs have something for everyone to try so they can get exposure to a variety of disciplines beyond math, English, science and social studies. And, yet, the work ties into those basic disciplines.

With California transitioning to Common Core framework, it involves more critical thinking.

All skill levels are expected to learn something in this facility. For instance, special education students can be taught how to do laundry onsite.

Earlier this year the school board approved hiring someone who will essentially be the director of the program. That person is expected to be hired at tonight's meeting.

Teachers already at the school can teach most of the classes. But experts in disciplines like massage therapy will be brought in when appropriate.

"There is a particular need for this up here," Larson told *Lake Tahoe News* while touring the facility this month. "If you are going into the health field, there is relevance."

Beyond STHS

In designing what the nearly \$8 million facility and program would be like, the school and district reached out to professionals in the community and beyond.



Sports med at STHS is a community endeavor.

Larson, Chris Proctor (director of Tahoe Center for Orthopedics) and Tim Johnson (Lake Tahoe Community College instructor) toured Stanford University's sports medicine facility to get ideas for what STHS could have.

Proctor told *Lake Tahoe News* it is difficult finding qualified people for entry-level jobs, so having training in town is attractive to him and his associates with Barton Health.

Johnson is working on developing an associate of arts degree at LTCC in sports medicine-kinesiology.

"The program will augment the physical therapy aide and personal trainer short-term certificates currently in place at LTCC and will provide a pathway for high school students to continue their education and possibly continue on to a bachelor or master's degree program," Virginia Boyar, LTCC dean of Career and Technical Education, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

It's rare for a community college to have a physical therapy program.

Proctor said, "It could be a medical clinic like what we saw at Stanford." This could be where all high school students and staff get their medical care in the future.

Larson, Boyar and Proctor all envision the facility being used when STHS is not in session. Who would use it, well, that remains to be seen. It could be conferences, training or something that no one has yet imagined.

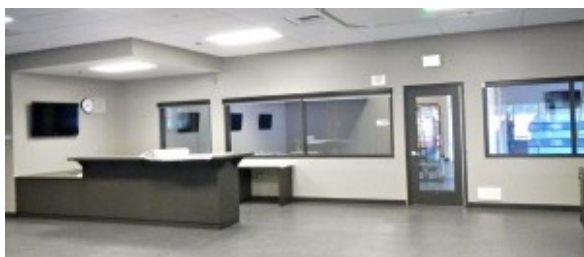
Proctor, who has coached basketball at the high school, said, "To handle injuries from diagnostics to treatment is a challenge for all high schools." He said he would have loved to have sent a player through the double doors for pre- or post-competition assessment.

"There will be equipment in there that is collegiate level," Proctor said.

High-caliber facilities

The therapy pool has cameras in the water to study body mechanics.

There will be two whirlpools – one cold, one hot.



The facility is designed as a teaching medical facility.

An area that looks like most any medical office is in many ways just that – an office. But it doubles as a teaching facility. Students will learn medical coding. The dental teacher already teaches a medical office class.

Three therapy rooms make one forget they are at a school.

Barton and Emerald Bay Physical Therapy personnel gave input as to what the hand therapy room should be like.

A large room could be to be divided into multiple classrooms.

A bank of computers still needs to be installed.

The building connects to the gym and weight room that already

existed.

“This replicates a college environment,” Larson said of the entire transformation of the school site. Students are changing classes in an orderly manner, seldom are they late because they want to be part of what is going on inside, they aren’t ruining what’s there because they are proud of their school.

“We have unique education opportunities you won’t find anywhere else,” Larson said.

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Note:

There will be a grand opening of the Sports Medicine building on Aug. 23 at 10am. This is open to the public. It will also be a time to tour the other facilities at South Tahoe High School.