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# NBHD Clinic and Pharmacy opens in Wheeler

## Will Chappell

Several hundred residents gathered in Wheeler on October 4, for the grand opening of the new Nehalem Bay Health District Clinic and Pharmacy, featuring a ribbon-cutting ceremony and open house.

The new \$12.2-million facility will allow the Nehalem Bay Health Center to expand its offerings to include dentistry and mental healthcare and significantly expand its clinic and pharmacy capacities and was supported by a \$10.25-million bond approved by voters in 2023.

"We reach a historic milestone today with this new health center and pharmacy," said Nehalem Bay Health District (NBHD) President Marc Johnson, "with new services, a new and better patient experience, and a wonderful facility for the dedicated healthcare workers who devote themselves to our community. So, I am so please to have so many folks here today."

Progress toward building the new facility began when NBHD went through a strategic planning process in 2018, which led the district's board of directors to expand the district's mission to include helping with area needs beyond healthcare, including housing. In 2021,

that led Tillamook County Commissioner Erin Skaar, then the director of Community Action Resource Enterprises, Tillamook's homeless services provider, to reach out to Johnson about a property adjacent to Highway 101 in Wheeler.

At first, Skaar thought that the parcel could present an opportunity to add much-needed housing to the community. Initial inquiries showed that it would not be fit for that purpose, but that it would serve as a good home for a new health center.

NBHD was then operating out of a

building constructed in the 1980s, which had only six exam rooms and lacked capacity for expansion. NBHD's board began working on a plan for a new facility and by 2022, had developed an ambitious \$15.5-million plan to build the new clinic and pharmacy, majorly renovate the district's senior care facility in Wheeler and repurpose the old clinic site for affordable housing.

## NBHD

Continued on Page 6

## BEST OF HEALTH & WELLNESS 2026

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Optometrist



Dr. Kyle Thompson  
Optometrist

# TILLAMOOK COUNTY PHYSICIANS & PROVIDERS

## MORONKE ABOYEWA, PMHNP-BC



### EDUCATION

Master of Science in Nursing (MSN)  
Shenandoah University

### CREDENTIALS

ANCC Board Certification:  
Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner

### MEDICAL INTEREST

Women's reproductive mental health, Schizophrenia spectrum and psychotic disorders, trauma and stressor related disorders, Autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, Depressive disorder, Bipolar and related disorders, substance use disorders, trauma-informed and holistic care, and integrated collaborative care.



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H25230

## JENNIFER ALLBRIGHT, EPDH



### EDUCATION

Lane Community College

### CREDENTIALS

Expanded Practice Dental Hygienist

### SPECIAL INTEREST

Comprehensive preventative dental hygiene for all ages



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H64798

## RHONDA BOLOW, MSW, CSWA



### EDUCATION

Portland State University

### CREDENTIALS

Masters degree in Social Work.  
Integrated Behavioral Health Clinician.

### MEDICAL INTEREST

Chronic illness, grief, anxiety, stress, depression, emotional dysregulation, experiences with sexual trauma using Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, Solution-Focused Therapy, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.



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H25228

## ESTHER BRADEEN, MS



### EDUCATION

Capella University

### CREDENTIALS

Professional Counselor Associate, under the supervision of Valerie Bundy, LPC, NCC

### MEDICAL INTEREST

Multimodal therapy used to help extraordinary individuals of all kinds without judgment; LGBTQAI+, all ages, gender, substance use, culture or neurodiversity. Background in domestic and sexual violence. Trained in Trauma-Focused CBT



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H23440

## PATRICIA DANNEN, PA-C



### EDUCATION

Oregon Health Sciences University

### CREDENTIALS

Certified Physician Assistant

### MEDICAL INTEREST

Family care of all ages, children to elderly, promoting healthy lifestyle in treatment and prevention of disease



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H47036

## MELISSA PAULISSEN, MD



### MEDICAL SCHOOL

Oregon Health Science University

### RESIDENCY

Providence Oregon Family Medicine

### MEDICAL INTEREST

Board Certified Family Medicine, Preventive Care, Pediatrics, Adult Medicine



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H47035

# TILLAMOOK COUNTY PHYSICIANS & PROVIDERS

## DARIN PRULHIERE, MD



### EDUCATION

Medical School  
Oregon Health  
Sciences  
University

### RESIDENCY

Ventura County  
Hospital

### MEDICAL INTEREST

Board Certified with the American Board of Family Medicine and Certified Medical Director specializing in geriatrics and preventative care.



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H25206

## DOVE RAINBOW, PA-C



### EDUCATION

Idaho State  
University

### CREDENTIALS

Certified  
Physician  
Assistant

### MEDICAL INTEREST

Preventive  
Care,  
Family

Medicine of All Ages,  
Women's Health



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H23439

## DR. ITZEL ROMERO, DDS



### EDUCATION

University of  
Texas School  
of Dentistry

### CREDENTIALS

Doctor of  
Medicine in  
Dentistry

### DENTAL INTEREST

Oral care for all ages,  
oral health education,  
Bilingual (English/Spanish).



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H25207

## LISA STEFFEY, DO



### MEDICAL SCHOOL

College of  
Osteopathic  
Medicine of  
the Pacific

### RESIDENCY

University  
of Wyoming  
Family Practice

### MEDICAL INTEREST

Board Certified Family Medicine,  
Women's Health, Pediatrics,  
Adolescent Health



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H47034

## JENNI TRAVIS, MSW, CSWA



### EDUCATION

Walla Walla  
University

### CREDENTIALS

Master's degree  
in Social Work.  
Behavioral Health  
Clinician.

### MEDICAL INTEREST

Works with children and their families developing integration through physical, emotional, spiritual, and relational wellness. Offers cognitive therapy, skills development, eye-movement and play therapies.



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H25229

## MICHELLE WALTERS, PH.D., LMFT



### EDUCATION

Masters in  
Counseling  
Psychology –  
University of  
San Francisco  
Doctoral degree  
in Depth  
Psychology –  
Pacifica Graduate  
Institute

### CREDENTIALS

Master's degree in Counseling  
and Ph.D. in Depth Psychology

### MEDICAL INTEREST

Integrated healing practices, maternal  
mental health, PTSD resulting from  
sexual trauma, grief integration,  
and stages of life challenges



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H28197

# NBHD

Continued from Page 3

Johnson said that during the development of that plan, community members asked how the district would pay for the projects, and he told them, “If you can’t envision the final project, you’ll never find a way to pay for it. If the vision is good; you can find the resources.”

The district first secured \$3 million in 2022’s federal OMNIBUS spending bill in support of the project as well as an additional \$500,000 grant from the federal government. The board then sought voter approval for the \$10.25-million bond issue in May 2023, and the measure passed with 69.7% voting in favor. Further support came in from the Oregon Community Foundation, Roundhouse Foundation, Murdoch Charitable Trust, Robert D. and Marcia Randall Charitable Trust, Ford Family Foundation, Sam Wheeler Foundation, Samuel Johnson Foundation, Jeffrey Koslovsky Fund, Fred Cornforth and Hampton Lumber, which donated \$100,000 in lumber to the project.

Work began with a July 2024 groundbreaking ceremony and was led by Bremik Construction, progressing on-schedule and under budget over the past 15 months.

At the ribbon-cutting ceremony,



**Johnson and Nelson cut the ribbon to open the Nehalem Bay Health District’s new clinic and pharmacy building in Wheeler, with other elected officials who supported the project looking on.**

Johnson welcomed the large crowd and thanked them for attending, before welcoming Nehalem Bay Health Center and Pharmacy CEO Gail Nelson to the dais.

Nelson thanked the Health Resources and Services Administration and other contributing foundations for funding furniture for the new facility,

which at 16,000 square feet is three times the size of the district’s old facility, and said that the clinic’s used medical equipment was being donated to Ukraine.

Nelson also thanked Dr. Harry Rinehart, a member of the Rinehart family which has practiced medicine in north Tillamook County since 1913 and helped build the hospital that was replaced by the district’s previous clinic, for his commitment. “Today’s the day to celebrate not only a new building, but the people, past and present, who make compassionate healthcare possible in north Tillamook County,” Nelson said.

Johnson then welcomed Wheeler Mayor Denise Donohue to the dais, thanking her for supporting the project. Donohue said that the new clinic marked a new chapter for the city and north Tillamook County, with easier access to important health services.

“For me, and I believe the city of Wheeler, this center represents far more than bricks and mortar, it represents access, access to better medical care, access to quality dentistry, access to vital mental health services,” Donohue



**Johnson addressed the crowd gathered for the grand opening of the new clinic and pharmacy.**

# NBHD

Continued on Page 7

# NBHD

Continued from Page 6

said. "These are not luxuries, these are necessities and today we are celebrating that these services are no longer miles away, out of reach, but here in our home."

Skaar then addressed the crowd, recounting the history of working with Johnson on identifying the property and lauding the NBHD board for their commitment to the community and the strength of their vision for the project.

Skaar also praised the district's voters for approving the bond in 2023. "There was a huge commitment that took a phenomenal leap of faith, to pass a bond for \$10.25 million in a community of roughly 3,600 people, that's not done," Skaar said. "People don't say I'm willing to tax myself that much for something in my community very often, but this community said, we believe, we believe in the vision, we believe in the health center, we believe in the clinic, and we're going to do it."

Finally, United States Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici

spoke, complimenting the facility and saying that she understood and appreciated the pivotal role NBHD and other rural healthcare providers play in their communities.

"I know that hospitals and clinics like this one here at Nehalem Bay are vital parts of the community and infrastructure and make such a difference, as you've heard from the mayor and everyone, not just to the people who live here, but to the economy, to the region," Bonamici said.

The speakers then gathered with other elected officials including Oregon Secretary of State Tobias Read, State Senator Suzanne Weber and State Representative Cyrus Javadi to cut the ribbon and open the new facility.

Members of the public were then welcomed to self-guided tour of the building, which features a 14-examination-room clinic and 1,400-square-foot pharmacy downstairs and three operatory dental suite, x-ray room, mental-health treatment room and large community room upstairs. The pharmacy opened on October 6 and the clinic began seeing patients later in the week.

## LEE LONG, DDS



### DENTAL SCHOOL

Loma Linda University

### MEDICAL INTEREST

General Dentistry

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H63182

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#### Jenni Travis, LMSW, CSWA

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#### Emily Boers, LCSW

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#### Nehalem Bay Health Center & Pharmacy

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Wheeler, OR 97147  
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TTY 800-735-2900

*Mobile Clinic, Countywide*  
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TTY 800-735-2900

*Main Street Clinic*  
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#### Chris Kruebbe, LCSW

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#### Adrienne Rombach, LCSW

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#### Michelle Walters, Ph.D., LMFT

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#### Tillamook County Community Health Centers Dental Clinic

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#### Dr. Itzel Romero, DDS

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#### Brian Holmes, DMD MPH FAGD FICD, Dental Director

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#### Marissa Valastro

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### OPTOMETRY

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Tillamook Vision Center  
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#### Dr. Darren Thorsen, OD

Tillamook Vision Center, 503-842-5568

#### Dr. Katie Stubbs, OD

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#### Dr. Kyle Thompson, OD

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#### Dr. Lee Johnson, OD, MS, FFAO

Tillamook Vision Center, 503-842-5568



# TILLAMOOK COUNTY PROVIDERS *Continued from Page 8*

## ORTHOPEDICS

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**Brett LaFleur, MD**  
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## PEDIATRICS

**Kerrin Swanson, CPNP**  
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 AdventistHealth.org/KSwanson  
**Lisa Steffey, DO**  
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 800-528-2938  
 TTY 800-735-2900  
 www.tillamookchc.org

## PHARMACY

**Nehalem Bay Pharmacy**  
 885 Nehalem Boulevard,  
 Wheeler, OR 97147  
 1-844-715-2299  
 nehalemhealth.org

## PODIATRY

**Brent Ricks, DPM**  
 503-815-2292  
 AdventistHealth.org/BRicks

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 1100 3rd St., Tillamook, OR 97141  
 38505 Brooten Road, Suite A  
 Pacific City, OR 97135  
 AdventistHealthTillamook.org  
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**Naturopathic Medicine**  
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## Tami Martin, FNP

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 nehalemhealth.org

## Johannah Braithwaite, FNP

1-800-368-5182  
 nehalemhealth.org

## PREVENTION PROGRAMS

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 Community Health Centers  
**Brandi-Ann Harris, DNP, FNP,**  
**PMHNP**  
 503-815-2292

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# TBCC Administration and Health Sciences Building to open April 18

**Will Chappell**

Work on Tillamook Bay Community College's new Administration and Health Sciences Building has been complete since late last year and in use by staff since February and has an official ribbon cutting scheduled for April 18.

That means the building 28,400-square-foot, \$23.8-million building will begin welcoming students for the college's spring term, offering state-of-the-art training technology for those in the nursing and EMT programs.

The need for a building to allow the college to add a nursing program was first identified in planning in 2018 and incorporated in the college's facilities master plan in 2020. That allowed the college to secure \$8 million in funding from the Oregon Legislature in 2021, setting up voter approval of a \$14.4-million bond in May 2022, that along with a \$1.4-million bond premium supported the project's \$23.8-million budget.

The new building is situated to the south of the college's main building and consists of 28,000 square feet spread across two floors. The first



floor houses a nursing skills lab, EMT lab and event center, while the second floor hosts more classrooms and a new administrative suite for the college.

In the EMT lab, an ambulance simulator is supplemented by live ambulances, donated by Adventist

Health Tillamook, which will be able to access the lab by an exterior garage door.

In the nursing lab, patient simulators mimic various medical conditions and be controlled by instructors, while four treatment bays featuring full hospital beds give students an opportunity to experience a clinical setting.

The building's also features an event center that can accommodate more than 350 for banquets and over 400 in a theatre-style seating arrangement. The large room features three double doors opening onto the courtyard between the new building and the college's current building, and is divisible, with three temporary walls providing five potential configurations.

On the building's second floor, there are two classrooms, three small lounges for students, a large meeting room and a new administrative suite for the college. The administrative suite features 18 offices and a smaller meeting room, as well as a staff lounge.

The second floor also features a display wall for rotating exhibits from local artists and an open walkway below skylights, allowing natural light to illuminate both the first and second floors.



# Equipment going in at new Adventist surgery expansion

**Will Chappell**

As construction on Adventist Health Tillamook’s four new operating rooms nears completion, installation of equipment has begun, and all mounted equipment was expected on site by the end of March.

That kept the new operating rooms on pace for a May opening, at which point work will pivot to renovating the hospital’s current surgery suite, which has continued operations throughout construction, into pre- and post-operative areas, a process expected to conclude by September.

Skanska USA Building is overseeing the \$18-million project, which broke ground in fall 2024 and is being undertaken to meet expanding surgical needs at the hospital and to fix an issue in the foundation of the existing operating rooms that were built in 1995. The new 4,500-square-foot addition is at the hospital’s north side and will feature four state-of-the-art operating rooms, as well as ample



**The new building’s exterior faces the hospital’s rear parking lot which will be largely repaved later in the construction process.**

sterile storage and equipment to sterilize instruments post-surgery.

The building’s heavy duty air handler has also been installed and

testing on it will begin soon to ensure that it can complete the required 20 air changes per hour needed in the surgery suites.

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# NCRD celebrates new natatorium

**Will Chappell**

Members of the north county community gathered on November 15, for a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new pools at the North County Recreation District in Nehalem.

At the ceremony, former North County Recreation District (NCRD) Executive Director Barbara McCann, Board Chair Michael House and current Executive Director Justin Smith all spoke, lauding the community's support of the project that builds on nearly a century's legacy of teaching children in the community to swim.

"This facility represents more than water and walls; it marks a new beginning for NCRD," said Smith. "We honor nearly a century of memories from the old pool and step boldly into the future with this new, state-of-the-art one. So today, as we cut this ribbon, let's celebrate not just the project being finished, but the future of what we've begun."

McCann, a former board member who served as executive director for several years before Smith's arrival earlier this year, spoke first at the ceremony, giving a history of the district and its mission to teach local youth to swim.

The community's commitment to swimming education started in 1929, when, after the drowning deaths of two youth, community members asked the local school board to include a pool in the upcoming expansion of the Nehalem Elementary School. The school board agreed and built a pool in the basement of the new wing of the school.

"Even though it was the Great Depression, the community felt the pool was a necessity and not a luxury," McCann explained. "They believed in our community, surrounded by water, every child should learn to swim as part of their basic education to prevent future drowning."

For almost 60 years, the pool remained an asset for the school district, until in the late 1980s, they consolidated their primary education efforts in the current Nehalem Elementary School building down the hill from the school with the pool. At that point, the Tillamook Board of County Commissioners stepped in to administer the pool, but their funding ran short in 1995, and local community members

were informed they would need to find an alternate funding source by the end of June or see the pool shuttered.

At that point, a group of locals, including McCann, came together to form the nonprofit Friends of the Nehalem Pool and raised funds to cover operating expense for two years to give them time to craft a long-term solution.

That solution was forming NCRD, for which the group sought voter approval with ballot measure 29 in November 1996, receiving 60% support from voters, allowing the district to begin operations on July 1, 1997.

McCann said that at first, district leaders planned to upgrade the existing pool to continue the swim education program in conjunction with the Neah-Kah-Nie School District, but that it became apparent over time that replacing the pool would be necessary.

Progress towards the replacement began in earnest under Executive Director Peter Nunn, who led the district from 2008-2014, and hired pool architect Carl

## NCRD

Continued on Page 14

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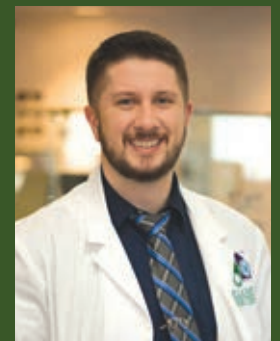
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**Dr. Lee Johnson**  
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# NCRD

Continued from Page 13

Sherwood to create a conceptual design for the new pool, which was unveiled in 2013. McCann said that the design did not generate community support at the time and Nunn decided to instead renovate the district's auditorium to build more support.

After the completion of that project and with a new executive director, David Wiegan, leading the district, focus shifted to the pool project in 2016, with Wiegan kicking off a capital campaign to support the project and eventually advancing an \$8.2-million bond question to the ballot in 2020. That bond measure passed with nearly 60% community support, but the timing proved inopportune as the coronavirus pandemic exploded, causing massive inflation and pushing the estimated cost of the project from \$12 million to \$16 million.

At that point, McCann had taken over the executive directorship of the district and, along with the board, decided that the project would be broken into three phases to get construction started and prevent further cost escalations, while



**NCRD Board Chair Michael House (left center) and Executive Director Justin Smith (right center) cut the ribbon to celebratorily open the district's new pool as a crowd, including former NCRD Executive Director Barbara McCann (third from left) watch.**

trusting that the balance of the funding would be found.

"We proceeded by faith," McCann said, "if you build it, the money will come." And it did.

Donors large and small across the community supported the project, which broke ground in 2023, with Adventist Health Tillamook donating \$500,000 in support of the facility's therapy pool in June 2024, and the Tillamook Board of County Commissioners rounding out the needed funding with the award of \$1.7 million in transient lodging tax funds to the project in December 2024.

After recounting the history behind the pool, McCann handed the microphone over to House, who spoke briefly, thanking the community for its support of the project.

"Thank you to all of our patrons and taxpayers that voted to help fund this project and our district in general, and thank you to our many, many donors both large and small, every dollar counts," House said. "The generosity and support of this community never ceases to amaze me."

Finally, Smith addressed the crowd, detailing the support that had made the project possible, which totaled 591 donations. Smith said that 153 families had donated a total of \$1.7 million, individuals had bought 404 commemorative bricks raising \$80,000, 20 foundations and charities had given \$2.78 million, 14 businesses donated \$20,000, county commissioners had chipped in \$1.7 million, the bond contributed \$8.2 million and a loan had been taken to cover the balance of the \$16-million budget.

"As you can imagine, with 591 donations, (district staffer) Kylie would always make the joke this building was built five dollars at a time, and honestly, it couldn't be more true," Smith said. "As a result, we have a 15,000-square-foot aquatic center, with a 145,000-gallon lap pool, a 30,000-gallon therapy pool and an outdoor patio to be enjoyed next summer."

Smith then invited event attendees to grab a flute of sparkling apple cider from the building's foyer, and the crowd toasted the new facility before Smith and House cut the ribbon to open the facility, which has been open to swimmers since September.

Tours were then offered, as well as games for kids, a photo booth and snacks, before a free, open swim.



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