

## Completed YMCA honors memory of Clark, Jordan

January 26, 2011

By Sarah Melton



Fitness coach and former NFL player Dovonte Edwards teaches a fitness plan to Judy Hale at the new Sally's Y in Denver. *Seth Mabry / LTN Photo*

David and Jo Clark have been waiting for their vision of honoring their late daughter, Sally, to become a reality.

After a five-year wait, that vision has been fulfilled with the opening of Sally's YMCA, a 22,000-square-foot facility that brings an array of special programs to East Lincoln County.

Sally's YMCA, dubbed Sally's Y, honors Sally McKenzie Clark and her cousin, Anna Grace Jordan, both 19, who were killed in a car accident in 2004.

"I am incredibly thankful that Sally's gentle spirit and unwavering faith will continue to live on through a Y built in her honor," Jo Clark said.

"Having Sally's memory honored through a facility that will be here to serve our community for years to

come is extraordinarily special. The way Lincoln County has come together to support the creation of this Y is an honor to Sally's memory."

David Clark said knowing he was able to honor his daughter and her cousin gave him the closure and acceptance to move on.

"(Sally) left an indelible mark on so many people," he said. "It was her legacy and her light that created this building. Jo and I sort of shepherded it along. It was really Sally's legacy, her life and the people wanting to help that made this become a reality."

Reminders of the girls are present throughout the building. Libba Lineberger Thompson has painted a portrait of Sally that will hang at the entrance. A memorial chapel with stained-glass windows is named after Jordan.

Sally's Y sits on 150 acres of land protected by the Catawba Lands Conservancy and features outdoor walking, hiking, jogging and biking trails.

The \$7 million facility also has a fitness center with personal training and group exercise classes, a gymnasium, locker rooms and an outdoor sports field.

Construction will begin soon on the outdoor pool, which will open Memorial Day this year. Eventually, the gym will be turned into an indoor pool and the gym will move to another area in the building.

"We had to modify our plans because this is the largest part of the operating budget and cost on the capital side," David Clark said.

Members can bring their children, ages 10-15, with them to work out or participate in the group classes. Childcare is available while members are using the facilities during specific hours of the day.

Summer camps, swimming lessons and sports clinics will be offered in the spring and summer.

Andy Calhoun, president of the YMCA of Greater Charlotte, said "Sally's Y will serve as a resource for wellness and programs that will work to improve the overall health and well-being of children and families in East Lincoln County."

"Thanks to the input of the Denver community, Sally's parents Jo and David and countless others, every part of Sally's Y will be useful to the community it serves — fostering relationships, developing leaders and promoting healthy living. It is a carefully and prayerfully thought-out design," he added.

Terry Matthews, director of operations at Sally's Y, said memberships have been strong since the facility opened earlier this month.

The membership fee is based on income and can be tailored to meet all levels of income. Members who sign up before Jan. 30 will be allowed to use their membership to visit any YMCA's in the Charlotte region, including the Lincolnton YMCA.

Anyone with existing Lincolnton YMCA memberships can upgrade to a metro-level membership for a fee, allowing them access to both YMCAs.

"We've had a lot of very touching stories come in with people who have lost their jobs and didn't know they were able to afford it," Matthews said. "The Y's goal is not to turn anybody away due to their inability to pay."

Sally's Y has almost 500 members so far and hopes to sign up at least 100 more members by the end of this month, David Clark said.

"I don't think there is any question that will happen," he added of meeting that goal. "People are continuously coming in wanting tours. They fill out an application as soon as they finish their tour."

Sally's Y will hold a grand opening and ribbon-cutting from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. Lunch will be served and the portrait of Sally Clark will be unveiled. Activities for children and tours will be offered.

Sally Clark attended Grace Covenant Church in Huntersville prior to her death. The church's pastor, Farrell Lemings, will say a prayer at the grand opening.

Sally's YMCA is at 1601 Forney Creek Parkway. Hours are 5:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 5:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Fridays, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays and 1 to 4 p.m. Sundays.

For more information, call (704) 716-7300 or visit [www.ymcacharlotte.org](http://www.ymcacharlotte.org).

<http://lincolntimesnews.com/default.asp?Section=57&VA=24179>