



HEALTH AND WELLNESS

by Emily Parker

Lowery Family Fitness Center at Meredith College

The Meredith community gathered last August for the unveiling of the new Lowery Family Fitness Center in the Weatherspoon Athletic Center. A \$1 million gift from Ann Lowery, '74, named the new fitness center after her parents, Herman and Ruth Lowery.

The gift helped fund renovations of Weatherspoon. The expansion increased the size of the fitness center by 5,400 square feet and allowed for more group fitness opportunities, personalized training, new equipment, more dedicated staff, and longer operating hours. The pool was removed to expand the fitness center.

Benefit to Athletic Teams

Meredith College athletic teams also benefitted from new areas for team training and sports conditioning. These enhancements allow Meredith athletes to remain competitive and will help in recruitment of the top-ranked athletes. "I wanted to give this gift because statistics show students who work out at least once per week are more likely to earn a higher grade point average than students who worked out less or not at all," says Lowery.

Growing Enrollment and Increasing Retention with Wellness Opportunities

An improved fitness center also brings the potential to help grow enrollment, increase retention, and give wellness opportunities not offered before to current and future students. Quality of life is also one of the six pillars in the College's strategic plan, so this gift aligns with Meredith's commitment to health and well-being.

In addition to Lowery's gift, The Parents Fund raised \$135,000 in the last two years to support the Fitness Center renovation. And a gift from The Cannon Foundation helped to support the fitness renovation in an effort to enhance enrollment and retention.

A Well-Rounded College Experience

The expansion provides students with a more well-rounded college experience and will make Meredith more appealing to prospective students.

"Current Meredith students have grown up during the fitness and wellness boom. Many arrive on campus with workout habits," says Lowery.

"With a new fitness center, Meredith students, faculty, and staff will have a facility to pursue their wellness objectives on campus at Weatherspoon and athletic teams will have a much-needed facility to train for their sports."

Lowery is serving her second term on the Board of Trustees and is co-chair of Beyond Strong | The Campaign for Meredith. In 2014, she was the recipient of the Meredith Reunion Philanthropy Award.

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New Equipment and New Technology

"There is so much excitement and gratitude for this gift," says Marie Chamblee, dean of education and health and human sciences. "This fitness center will provide a place for students and athletes to be active and to be involved."

The Lowery Family Fitness Center has 11 treadmills, 8 bikes, 8 elliptical cross trainers, 4 ascent trainers, 2 rowers, and 6 power lifting racks. To compare, the previous fitness center had 10 cardio machines. There are also free weights, kettlebells, resistance machines, physio balls, medicine balls, bands, and accessory equipment available.

Along with the new equipment is new technology. "On all the cardio equipment are QR codes that can be scanned into the LFconnect App, and it will record the exercise, sets, repetitions, and weight lifted," says Erica Roelofs, director of the Lowery Family Fitness Center. "Also, individuals can bring headphones to plug into the machines that allow them to listen to any TV in the fitness center."

The center will give students wellness opportunities not offered before and three physical education courses will be taught in the facility this semester. During those times, the campus community will still have access to the center.

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“I am very excited that Meredith College is able to provide a facility with so many options to help all improve and maintain their health and wellness to keep going strong,” Roelofs said.

Operating with Lower Energy Costs

“I truly believe that we have all the essential equipment that any individual could want in a facility. I hope all students, faculty, and staff utilize this great facility as much and as often as they are able.”

Roelofs also noted that with the exception of the treadmills, the cardio equipment is self-powered, which allows the center to operate with lower energy costs.

Honoring a Memory

Lowery says, “It is an honor for me to name this facility in memory of my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Herman T. Lowery of Winston-Salem. Forty-five years ago, they had the foresight to know that Meredith was exactly what I needed.”

“This is the kind of reveal I wanted with all of these students here,” said Lowery. “The best thing about this fitness center is we can all benefit from it and it will help our health and well-being.”



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Emily Parker is the Campaign Communications Manager for Meredith College. She creates and implements communication programs that increase awareness and participation in the College’s Beyond Strong fundraising campaign. Meredith College, located in Raleigh, N.C., is one of the largest women’s colleges in the U.S.

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