

## Linn-Mar unveils 'awesome' new pool

Written by Jim Ecker

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Amazing. Fantastic. Awesome.

Those were some of the superlatives tossed around Thursday evening when the Linn-Mar School District introduced its new \$11.7 million aquatic center to the public.

"It's amazing. And it's so well-lit," said Linn-Mar senior Samantha Fitzgerald. "And it's so clean right now. I can't wait to get in (the water) in a week or two."

The Linn-Mar boys swimming team will begin practicing in the aquatic center next Thursday. The first meet is scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 10 when the boys will host Cedar Falls.

"I'm speechless," said Tom Belin, the boys swim coach. "How fabulous for a high school to have a facility like this."

"It's got perfect dimensions, perfect depth, sight lines. Everything about this is perfect."

Belin said it's a Myrtha pool, named after the company in Italy that originally designed this type of aquatic center. It holds 525,856 gallons of water and has eight lanes. It's designed to limit waves and produce fast times.

"It's magnificent," said Linn-Mar senior Carter Starr, who swims for the boys team. "It's something else, I'll tell ya. It's really awesome to see something so nice come to this district."

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Dr. Katie Mulholland, the superintendent of the Linn-Mar School District, said Linn-Mar promised the Mississippi Valley Conference 25 years ago that it would build a new pool when it originally joined the league.

"It's been a long time coming," she said during the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Linn-Mar teams have practiced at Coe College and the Marion YMCA over the years without a pool of their own. The Lions will save an hour of precious time every day by not having to ride a bus from Linn-Mar to Coe for workouts.

"We're happy to say goodbye to those," Starr remarked. "What's great about it, it gives us time to practice whenever we want. We don't have to practice late at night. We have our pool to do it right after school."

Linn-Mar built the aquatic center behind the football stadium, near the site of the former baseball field. It took approximately 16 months to build. The architect was Novak Design - Gary Landhauser, the pool engineer was WTI - Doug Whiteaker and the general contractor was Conlon Construction.

Linn-Mar originally hoped to finish the pool in time for the girls swim team to use this season, but missed by several weeks. "I was bummed by that," Fitzgerald said.

Bobby Kelley, formerly the director of the Cedar Rapids Aquatics Association, has been hired as director of the aquatic center. He will schedule events, develop programs for the entire

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Linn-Mar community and oversee the facility.

"It's a wonderful, wonderful facility that both the boys and girls will take advantage of," he said. "It will be a benefit to the entire school district."

Several hundred members of the community attended the ceremony, along with school officials and swimmers from both Linn-Mar teams.

"Compared to every other pool I've ever been in, this is by far the best," said Chad Derlein, who coaches the Linn-Mar girls. "It's completely awesome. It's just unbelievable."