

## Attempts to revive membership

# Jewish Community Center begins renovations

By JUDITH BEZNE

The two-year-old Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield will spend \$500,000 on renovations this year in an attempt to win back some of its membership.

Shoddy finishing touches to the \$12.5 million building, displeasure with services and the center's location are reasons for resignations by at least 2,000 members.

Gary Leo, associate executive director, reports center membership was 14,000 after it opened in January 1975, complete with a 200,000 square foot facility on 132 acres.

Membership now is about 12,000. The major exodus was from the health club which helps foot the bill for other services.

"But we're coming into a time when things are on the upswing," Leo said. "We're very optimistic about what we're doing. The dust has settled. We've started to move in good directions."

Soon, \$225,000 will be spent to improve health club facilities, to attract men and women at an annual fee of \$360 and \$315, respectively.

An additional \$265,000 will go to add six racquetball courts to an existing

five to placate unhappy members who have been unable to get court time.

LEO ACKNOWLEDGES the center has had its share of start-up problems.

The center's health clubs were not as plush or as well-run as private clubs nearer to residents' homes.

Poor lighting and tennis court construction sent many would-be center tennis players scuttling back to private clubs. This fall the nine court tennis bubble was shut down, although tennis on Sundays recently has resumed.

Spiraling operating costs forced membership dues from \$165 to \$250 per

family since opening day. Concurrently, there were severe cutbacks in staff.

The location of the center, at Maple and Drake roads, was also a problem. The bulk of the Jewish population resides in the Southfield area, and many determined the distance was too far to travel.

Although many would-be members find it difficult to reach the West Bloomfield Center, Leo says that only 7,000 members belonged to the center when it was located at its previous Detroit location, now the Northwest Activities Center. That's an increase of

more than 5,000 compared to

Leo quotes figures which put 14 per cent of the Jewish population of metropolitan Detroit in West Bloomfield and North Farmington with 18 per cent expected by 1982. The center recently put out a mailing directed at these residents featuring special enrollment offers.

"THE CENTER IS a deficit financed, non-profit, communal agency," Leo added, "which will always rely on outside support to offer services."

"When people talk about the center, they only see the physical education

part of it. He cites cultural, educational and social services for all ages and interests for members and also the general community.

The center generates 55 per cent of its own revenues with the rest supplied primarily through the Allied Jewish Campaign and United Foundation.

Five per cent of money collected through Allied Jewish Campaign contributions goes to fund center operations. The recently announced renovations will be paid out of a revolving capital improvement fund authorized by the Jewish Welfare Federation.

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