

## A wall for all ages

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By: [Aaron Hagen](#), Worthington Daily Globe

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As part of the Kids' College at Minnesota West Community and Technical College, children spent time at the Worthington Area YMCA Thursday.

The kids were running, jumping and competing, all while using the YMCA's newest piece of equipment — the XerPro Sportwall ([www.xergames.com](http://www.xergames.com)).

“The kids loved it,” Ken Karwoski said, who was leading the activities Thursday. “What are things kids love to do? They like to run, they like to throw things and they like to hit things. And that’s the wall. They are running around, they are throwing balls and they are using the noodles to hit the targets. It’s a great way to get kids active and moving. It works great for the little kids, but it also starts building into sports elements, the change of direction, the throwing, the catching and it can be developed to training top-level athletes.”



The YMCA had been looking for a way to improve the space set aside for the kids' gym.

“As it stood before, it was a just an empty room with two small basketball hoops in there. What it was designed for was to give kids a space to be active and have fun,” said Ryan Seykora, the YMCA's health and fitness director. “We wanted to look at a way where we could find something to keep kids entertained with a piece of equipment that didn't take up a lot of room in a smaller area. We kind of looked around at a few different things and one of the trends now is interactive technology.

“It's just basically fun for all ages. It's like a giant Nintendo Wii. The only difference is that it's not simulated activity. You actually have to throw the ball at a target and you have to catch the ball coming back. People are almost exercising by accident and having fun.”

The wall is made up of three different panels. All together, it stands 8-foot high and 12-foot wide.

Each panel has seven lighted targets, which can be used for a variety of games and activities. The wall can withstand hits from a variety of balls, or foam noodles, which were used Thursday.

“Depending on the sport that you want to train for or the activity, we can do movements and exercises that are going to transfer to the everyday sport,” Seykora said. “The key when it comes to athletic training

is you train the movements, not the muscles. When you train the movements and become efficient in those movements, you become better at sports.”

While it can be used for sport-specific training, the sportwall is also geared toward all ages and abilities.

“The versatility of the sportwall was huge for us in deciding to pursue it, knowing that you can pertain to the average ‘Joe’ and average ‘Jane,’ youth, senior citizens and also the athletes,” Seykora said. “That’s the nice thing, is that it’s everybody. Everybody can do it. With the different modes, we can tailor it to the individual’s abilities.”

After Seykora researched the wall, he needed to secure funding.

“The Worthington Regional Healthcare Foundation provided the piece of equipment with their generosity and support,” he said. “They understand the importance of physical activity for not only our youth, but also for adults and active older adults.”

And on Thursday, kids were able to see the full benefits.

“They were running and hitting things,” said Karwoski, who led the kids through eight different exercises. “What more could a kid want? They are smiling and having a great time. Their friends are there with them cheering them on and they are trying to be better than the other team.

“Anytime you get competition going between kids, they are going to push themselves a little bit harder, they are going to run harder and they are going to do everything just a little bit faster. That’s one great thing that wall has, it allows two teams to compete against each other.”

While Seykora was instrumental in acquiring the sportwall, he’s also been able to use it himself.

“What’s nice about it for me was knowing that we were still exercising, but we were having fun,” he said. “We were able to listen to music on the system and have some friendly competition.

“We got about four people in there playing a big game one afternoon and it was just awesome. You’re competing against each other and you’re having fun. That’s what it’s about.”

With the new piece of equipment in place and ready to use, Seykora is encouraging everyone to give it a try.

“We want to offer open times for all our different age groups, from our youth to our teens to our adults to our active older adults,” he said. “We’d like to do organized classes and have open times. We want to be able to outreach to people and be able to come in and use the sportwall.”