

Concordia Foundation set to begin major campaign

EAST KILDONAN

By **DAN FALLOON**

STAFF REPORTER

dan.falloon@canstarnews.com

The Concordia Foundation is hoping to turn its dream of the Concordia Health & Fitness Centre into a reality.

The foundation will take its first steps to getting the proposed facility, developed by Concordia Wellness Projects Inc. at an estimated cost of over \$43.7-million, built by raising money through its 30th anniversary gala dinner at the Winnipeg Convention Centre on April 19. The project's proposal includes evenly-split financing between the developer, the federal government, and the provincial government.

The 91,000 square foot centre would be built on a vacant site just east of Concordia Hospital on the north side of Concordia Avenue, and just west of Lagimodiere Boulevard. Organizers hope to complete the project by 2016. The centre plans to include indoor and outdoor running tracks, fitness and therapy pools, a cardiovascular studio, a group exercise studio, a weight room, and education rooms to host courses on improved health, ranging from proper nutrition to smoking cessation.

The endeavour is the largest in the foundation's history, surpassing the approximately \$10 million it raised over a four-year period to build the Hip & Knee Institute. Foundation chief operating officer Les Janzen explained the opening of the Hip & Knee



Photo by Dan Falloon

Concordia Foundation chief operating officer Les Janzen, Concordia Foundation president Dr. Thomas Turgeon, and Concordia Foundation board member Louise Townsend are looking forward to undertaking a fundraising campaign for the Concordia Health & Fitness Centre.

Institute in 2009 gave him some insight into how necessary a fitness centre is, given how many surgeries could be prevented with proper fitness.

"The Health & Fitness Centre is intended as prevention," said Janzen. "Many, many of

the patients that come to us for joint replacement surgery are obese for various reasons. Some injury or some ailment caused them to become inactive, and then, of course, that leads into a general decline in health.

"We know we can't possibly ramp up to

do all the joint replacements that are needed in this world, so what can we do to help our people stay healthier?"

Foundation president Dr. Thomas Turgeon noted the centre's opening would also help reduce instances of diabetes, hypertension, cancer and heart disease.

"By improving access to ventures that can help people to improve their strength and physical fitness and cardiovascular fitness, it helps in all aspects of health," he said.

St. Vital resident Louise Townsend recently had a hip replacement completed at the institute, and she credited her overall good health for making the process as simple as possible. She now sits on the foundation's board of directors, and is the gala planning chairperson.

"Due to arthritis and injury, my hip literally collapsed," she said. "I had such an incredible experience (at the institute), but I know that part of my incredible experience was my level of fitness going into, and what I was able to do after, the surgery.

"I'm the good example and that's what I hope to continue to portray."

Townsend said, barring injury, she doesn't expect to need to have her other hip replaced.

Various levels of sponsorship for the gala dinner are available. For more information, contact the Concordia Foundation at 204-661-7156.

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