Promoting Healthy Lifestyles
by LECOM (Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine)
October 21, 2010

The Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Opens Up Its New Medical Fitness & Wellness Center

Studies show that the publics' perception of the quality of healthcare being delivered in a facility is often shaped by the image and appearance presented; not only by the condition of the physical plant, but also the quality of the interior design. Upon entering, patients and visitors begin a subconscious comparison of what they are told, what they see and what their experiences bear out.

Extensive research has been conducted that links the physical environment of hospitals and healthcare facilities to patients and staff outcomes, known as evidence-based design. In 2009, the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM) took a major step to promote healthy lifestyles in Erie, Pa., with the expansion of the campus to a new building adjacent to Millcreek Community Hospital. LECOM recently opened the LECOM John M. & Silvia Ferretti Medical Fitness & Wellness Center.

The LECOM Medical Fitness & Wellness Center believes a peaceful mind and a calm spirit are just as important as a healthy body. In keeping with the Osteopathic philosophy of nurturing the mind, body and spirit, LECOM approaches health and fitness from a holistic, medically integrated perspective. The center provides an environment designed to focus on a person's total well-being by offering something for every wellness goal, from day-to-day health and fitness, to sports performance training and rehabilitation.

Facility

The design and development of the wellness center are the result of intense study and planning by the LECOM team. Their mission was to develop a facility that creates a healthy lifestyle atmosphere; one that welcomes visitors and draws them into the fitness center that occupies the first two floors. Based on the direction from the College, Codgell, Spencer ERDMAN (formerly Marshall Erdman and Associates), a well-respected healthcare architecture firm, integrated the LECOM design team's requirements into working architectural drawings.

The first and second levels house the fitness and conference center. The third level provides suites for Medical Associates of Erie. The expansive two-story atrium with a glass curtain wall allows natural light to fill both levels of the fitness center.

Artwork

LECOM wanted to improve the focal feature of the building and worked with Codgell, Spencer ERDMAN to select artwork that would be compelling yet soothing – a symbiotic blending of medical and relaxation. Minneapolis, Minn.-based artist Vara Kamin achieved this. Her internationally acclaimed artwork is renowned for its relaxing and healing properties. Similar in planning to a retail environment, wellness facilities are conceived with patient access and convenience in mind. Innovative architectural features enhance the wellness experience.

Illuminating Challenge

Traditional fluorescent lighting was originally specified, however, this would have required on-going maintenance given this technology's short lifespan – opening the 4’-6 x 4’ back panels to access the fixtures. The architects knew there had to be better, more efficient technology.

Having worked with Wisconsin-based Everbrite Lighting previously on healthcare projects, Codgell, Spencer ERDMAN again turned to this innovative company to help provide a solution to the challenge of illuminating artwork that fills the expansive two-story atrium. Everbrite's Graphic Panel Illuminators, which utilize state-of-the-art LED luminaires and patented technology, were the perfect solution. The originally specified fluorescent fixtures need replacing six times to equal the lifespan of LED luminaires that were installed.

LED Solution

Everbrite Lighting has transformed lighting possibilities in hundreds of healthcare applications and was able to design, engineer and build custom LED light panels that fit the curvature of the curtain wall. Essentially the whole curtain wall frame was turned into a series of large light boxes. Long life, high brightness LED's were used to achieve a certain light level. The LED panel system also provides uniform illumination, something that is very difficult to attain with fluorescent.

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LECOM President John M. Ferretti, D.O. and Provost and Vice-president Silvia M. Ferretti D.O. have led the project team to design a medically integrated wellness center that not only serves the fitness needs of LECOM students and employees of Millcreek Health System, but also provides a facility that will encourage Erie County citizens to pursue a better quality of life. Dr. Silvia Ferretti was one of the visionaries who designed the facility with all of its amenities in tribute to her parents. The building is named in their honor.