

Federal Construction

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Fit to fly

Inside the new
Air Force fitness center





Exterior of the new fitness center at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station. Credit: James D'Ambrosio, Public Affairs.

Fit to fly

Inside the new Air Force fitness center

“You need to be mentally and physically fit to do the mission we do every day.”

Col. Christopher Witter, mission support group commander, 914th Air Refueling Wing, Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station in Upstate New York said this two years ago during a groundbreaking ceremony for a new fitness center at the Reserve Station. This year, the center is being completed by the US Army Corps of Engineers, New York District.

The \$14 million, 22,000-square-foot center will help keep Airmen in top physical and mental shape so they can continue to fulfil their important mission for the nation.

The Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station is a US Air Force Reserve Command military installation located near the Canada-New York State border. Presently, there are more than 1,700 personnel assigned to the station, which include Active Guard Reserve, Active Reserve Technician, Traditional Reserve, DoD Civilian and contracted 914th Air Refueling Wing personnel. “All Airman have the core mission, which is to train, perfect and provide full-spectrum rapid global mobility to the joint force, whenever, wherever,” says Second Lt. Lucas Morrow, 914th ARW public affairs officer.

The new state of the art fitness facility incorporates all the latest in the fitness world—a move that was a must, as the direction of fitness in the military today is Functional Strength Training. A delegation from the base visited 25 to 30 fitness facilities in the western half of New York State, ranging from military sites to high schools and YMCAs, to gather ideas to submit to the architects chosen by the Air Force.

The new center will be the first fitness in the Air Force Reserve Command to have an area totally dedicated to this training.

“This facility will allow our Airman to be ready to perform their mission whenever called upon,” says Michael W. Williams, 914th ARW Sustainment Chief, who has been working on getting a new gym built at the Reserve Station for 25 years, so this is a huge achievement for him.

The station has a physical fitness center that was built in the 1950s that is undersized and in poor condition. Jeremy Pagoda, Project Engineer, New York District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers says there are significant deficiencies with the facility due to the aging and inefficient construction materials used, maintenance costs, and utility costs that will continue to be high and worsen with time.

This old facility is being replaced with a modern one that will meet the physical and mental needs of today’s Airmen. The new fitness center will be approximately 22,000 square feet in size and the one-story building will be 40 feet tall and will accommodate approximately 250 persons daily.

Open all day, every day, the center features a large asphalt parking lot to

accommodate the times of the year when there is more Airman at the station, such as during training weekends. It also includes a lobby, administration area, locker room and showers and a fully trained staff that will help the military personnel meet their fitness needs.

“The new fitness center will have an open concept that will allow plenty of space

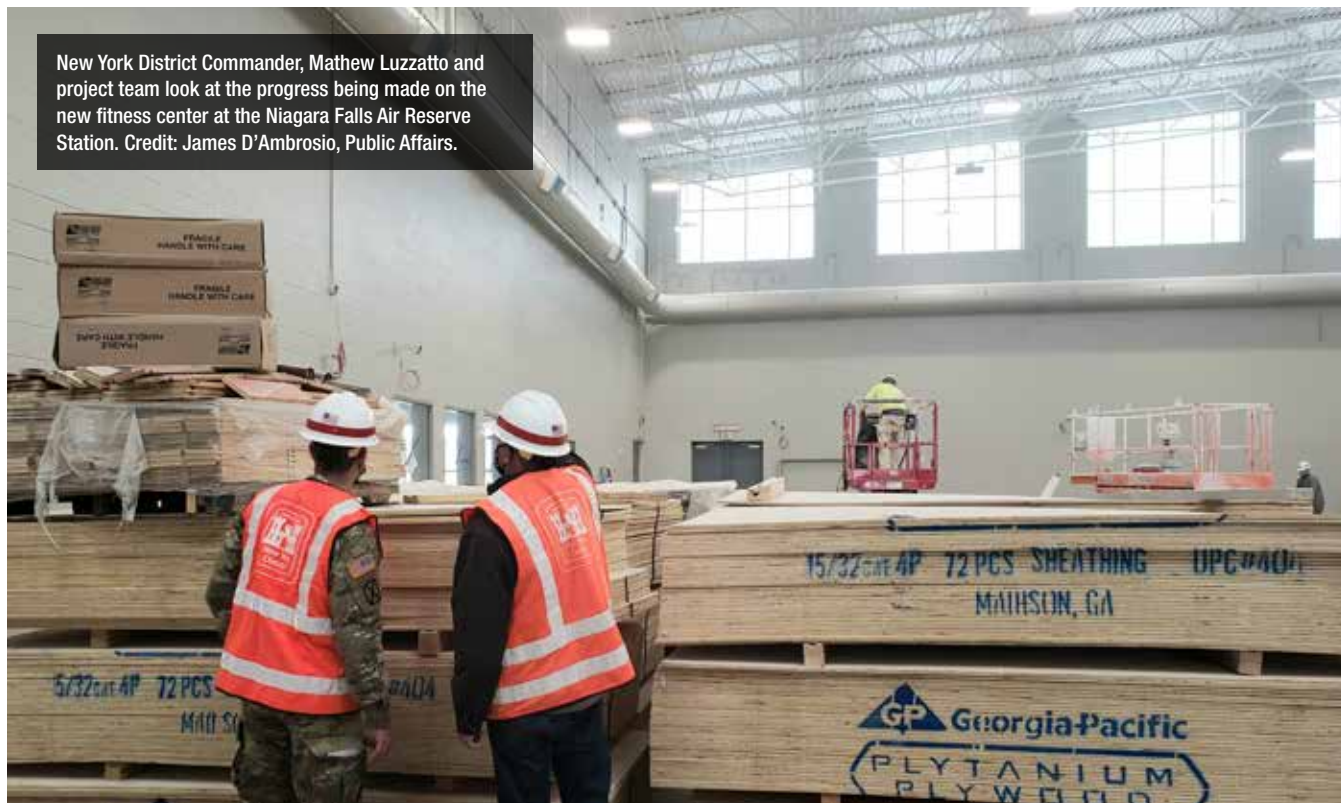
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— Second Lt. Lucas Morrow, 914th ARW public affairs officer.



New York District Commander, Mathew Luzzatto and project team look at the progress being made on the new fitness center at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station. Credit: James D’Ambrosio, Public Affairs.

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for strength and cardio fitness, group classes, a Functional Strength Training Room, and fitness equipment, including weight machines, free weights, dumbbells, cages and racks,” Pagoada says. “There will be plenty of space for basketball, racquetball and volleyball courts.”

Pagoada says there also will be greater flexibility for future reconfiguration. For example, the basketball court will have six retractable basketball goals and additional court lines that will allow the main court to be divided into two smaller courts and a retractable divider curtain will be planned for between the two smaller basketball courts.

That little something extra

In addition, the fitness center will include something that makes it even more state of the art. Not only does it meet the latest anti-terrorism and force protection requirements

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for buildings, but it also will be fully accessible for wounded vets and senior retirees. The reserve knows that physical well-being goes hand in hand with mental well-being and the new fitness center will recognize this.

“We are reshaping the role of our exercise physiologist who will be working at the new fitness center,” Williams says. “In this new role, the exercise physiologist will be working on the total well-being of all our military members. The new fitness center will provide a great opportunity to incorporate health and wellness into the day to day life of our Airmen.”

The Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, which will provide employment for thousands of military and civilian personnel, is an integral part of the Niagara County community and surrounding communities in Western New York. “The mission readiness of the 914th Air Refueling Wing is largely dependent on the health, fitness, and morale of assigned Reserve and civilian employees,” Pagoada says. “A properly sized and efficiently configured physical fitness center is essential to improve all of these attributes.” ■

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