Youngsville rec center coming soon

2-gymnasium center to open in about 10 months near sports complex

By Katie de la Rosa
edelarosa@theadvertiser.com

Youngsville Mayor Wilson Viator stood atop a dirt mound beneath a cloudless blue sky to thank everyone involved in developing the town’s future recreation center, which is projected to open its doors in that exact spot in about 10 months.

With shovel in hand, Viator addressed more than 50 people at the groundbreaking for the Youngsville Recreation Center on Savoy Road, dispensing credit for the $3.5 million project to local state lawmakers, his city council, the architects and the builders.

The two-gymnasium center will sit adjacent to Youngville’s new 70-acre, $15.5 million sports complex, which is set to open this weekend. Architect Mark Lalande said the final blueprint for the center took him roughly three years to design, partly because it was "initially thought to be a multi-purpose facility" until unforeseen budget cuts molded it into the concept it is now.

“We’ll call it ‘the mill,’” Lalande said. “It will have exposed structures, have simple roofing.”

Lalande said Youngsville city officials approached his firm to design the center, and he and his small staff are responsible for some of the buildings within the sports complex, like the pro shops and observation decks.

Youngsville acquired the land through a donation from Young’s Industries, without which, Viator adamantly reiterated, the two sports facilities would never have come to fruition. Viator said estimates have more than...
500,000 people visiting the sports complex, which features 10 tennis courts, five baseball fields and four softball fields, within the first year, with more than 800,000 visiting the year after the recreation center opens.

Tony McDonnell of Ratcliff Construction said his Alexandria-based company won the bid to build the center. It is only one of "lots of projects" Ratcliff has done in Acadiana, McDonnell said, which include the new Lafayette Public Safety Complex, a five-building recreational center on Willow Street.

"We're really focusing south of the I-10 strip," McDonnell said of Ratcliff. "There's a lot of work to be done down here. It's just booming.

The sports complex was largely funded through a 1-cent tax Youngsville voters approved in 2011, and Viator said the money funneled for the center was the town's only use of state funds for these two facilities.

Three of Youngsville's five councilmen attended the 15-minute-long groundbreaking, including Councilwoman Dianne McClelland, who gleefully patted the dirt after more than eight local figures struck their shovels into the ground.

Ken Kastner, vice president of operations for McDonald's in Acadiana, said he and three other employees came to the ceremony to support the "mayor and the great city of Youngsville.

"We're glad to see the growth, and we look forward to all the increased traffic that this is going to bring," Kastner said, adding that out of the 21 stores in the 12 parishes he oversees, he believes the new center will benefit not only the Youngsville location but "three or four others.

Viator said he is most proud and grateful for "the community," who led the charge for these sports facilities through what the mayor called "a grassroots level.

"We asked the people what we wanted, and they decided what they wanted," Viator said. "We build exactly what our people want."