

Bancroft Fitness celebrates new HVAC system



By Bill Kilpatrick

On Feb. 23 members of Bancroft Fitness, along with local dignitaries, MPP Ric Bresee, members of the Bancroft Community Family Health Team and their board gathered at Bancroft Fitness to celebrate the installation of their new heating cooling and air conditioning system. The installation was made possible through an Ontario Trillium Foundation capital grant for \$71,700 that was awarded in November of 2023. The celebration was in fact a double celebration because Feb. 22 was the second anniversary of Bancroft Fitness' move from L'Amable to their new location within the Town of Bancroft. Not only that, but those present also got a sneak peak at the new hydrotherapy pool that is currently being installed and should be completed sometime in April. From its humble beginnings in a small room on Billa Street to its current location, Bancroft Fitness is quickly becoming the fitness and rehabilitation hub of North Hastings. According to Dr. Carolyn Brown, the idea for Bancroft Fitness began over 30 years ago when she was confronted by a patient who suffered from soft tissue pain syndrome from a car accident. She realized that she could do nothing for her because no physiotherapist or rehabilitation facility existed at that time. Brown then partnered with Angela Carrera, who was running a small kinesiology practice out of the basement of the Billa Street medical building and together they decided to create a clinic to help patients. From there the idea grew, and in partnership with the Town of Bancroft, Brown helped open the gym in L'Amable where they were located for the last 20 plus years, but "It never was successful from the point of it being self-sufficient," explained Brown, "we had 80 to 100 memberships per year, [but it's] quite different now." Brown, who has been dedicated to the Bancroft Fitness board of directors for over 20 years, described the current state of Bancroft Fitness as "really wonderful" because of the array of services they provide such as exercise clinics, a place for high performance athletes to work out, cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation, physiotherapy, and soon hydrotherapy, as well as a lower limb preservation project that is currently in the works. "This is built for people who need to exercise," said Brown who then asked rhetorically, "Who is that? All of us; it's everybody." Jocelyn Jan, the manager of Bancroft Fitness, never expected the level of success that Bancroft Fitness is currently experiencing. When they first moved into the old Legion building on Station Street two years ago they were hoping for 100 members a month, "We thought 100 members would be great. We were excited about that," said Jan. However, they finished 2023 having 500 members per month and currently have exceed that already this year having topped 567. "It's insane," said Jan, "We never dreamed that we would be as big as we are." Part of that success, according to Jan, is that they appeal to a broad demographic including students, seniors, and everybody in between. Jan explained that their chair Yoga classes have become so popular that they have had to turn people away. The health and safety of their members has always been a priority as well as providing an inclusive space, explained Jan, which was why installing a new ventilation system was so important. "It's an old building so we've had our ups and downs with the heating and cooling and we've been without heat in some spaces in here resulting in cold yoga as opposed to hot yoga," joked Jan, who added that "We've had some times where it's very hot in here in the summer time and we have had to have

disclaimers because we've been without air conditioning. For those higher risk patrons who are accessing the cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation program, the new HVAC system is vital to their success as they need a comfortable environment that does not strain their breathing or their heart, said Jan. The HVAC system was also crucial for the hydrotherapy pool, added Jan, as they had to have the ventilation upgrades before the pool could be utilized. As a not for profit, said Jan, we just try to be sustainable and all the money we make we try and put back into the gym and not having to pay for the new heating and ventilation system has been great for us. Hastings and Lennox and Addington MPP Ric Bresee was amazed and impressed by what was happening at Bancroft Fitness. The idea of bringing together the [physio] therapy, the rehab processes for the cardiac and pulmonary [patients], -all of it- into what appears to be an everyday fitness gym, is absolutely amazing, said Bresee who was particularly taken by the hydrotherapy pool adding, I absolutely love the hydrotherapy pool. Having a tread mill in a jacuzzi might actually get me to exercise, he joked. In the Bancroft Fitness media release Bresee stated that, We all understand the benefit of staying fit. The best healthcare is staying healthy. Which is a sentiment that Bancroft Mayor Paul Jenkins also echoed stating that, We all understand the current pressure on the medical community and the best way to relieve them is to not have to use them. Jan, Brown, and the master of ceremonies for the gathering, Renee Robinson, wanted to thank all the people that have helped Bancroft Fitness achieve their current success from the Town of Bancroft, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Royal Canadian Legion, Kathy Irwin from the North Hastings pool committee, along with the support of the executive director of the Bancroft Community Family Health Team, Sandra McGrath, as well as Dr. Eric Blanchard, and member of the Bancroft Family Health Team board of directors, Kim Bishop. We are extremely grateful, said Jan who says that the members of Bancroft Fitness, are always looking for ways to support the members of our community with their activity needs. Having proper, reliable heating, cooling and ventilation will certainly help us provide the best fitness environment possible.