

Grafton pool gets lift from new toy

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Grafton April 6, 2006 After nearly 15 years of the same old equipment, the Family Aquatic Center, located 649 N. Green Bay Road, is adding something to its pool this summer to make it stand out from the rest of its state competition.

"It just seems like one of the nicest things that we could add to the pool," said village trustee and community activities committee member Richard Rieck of the 9-foot-high AquaClimb, the first of its kind in the state and set to be installed on June 13. "It was a good fit for the money that we paid for it."

The decision to purchase the nearly \$20,000 AquaClimb came after seeing a steady decrease in pool-use from residents over the years, namely pre-teens, who make up a large portion of the center's user base.

"They're kind of lost, because they can't drive and are too young to get a job. So it's important to have recreational activities out there for them to get excited about," said village trustee Deborah Ryan, who has been on the activities committee for the last eight years.

When asked about the reason behind the previous lack of new equipment at the center, Ryan pointed to the loss of impact fee funding in the recreation department budget.

"This is something we fought really hard to get money for," she said, also noting that the center will be adding a few floatable basketball hoops to the pool. "It's the most exciting thing that's happened over there in a long-time."

Manufactured by Pyramide USA of Leesburg, VA, the AquaClimb is made up of 3-foot-high fiberglass panels that can be rotated into four different orientations to change the level of difficulty.

"What we've seen with this product is a huge interest from teens and pre-teens because it's something that challenges them and is fun," said Emilie Kelly, a spokesperson for Pyramide, which introduced AquaClimb to the market in the spring of 2005.

According to Kelly, one of the reasons behind AquaClimb's popularity is the safeness factor, as the structure is angled over the pool so that a climber falling off the wall will land into the water.

"There's been a trend over the last few years from pools of taking out their diving boards because of liability and safety concerns," Kelly said, adding that no AquaClimb accidents have yet been reported. "You have to start out in the water to get to it, so the kids using the AquaClimb are already swimmers."

Grafton's wall will be located in the 12-foot deep-end section of the pool next to the diving boards and will be segregated off with floating ropes.

When the wall's is in use, village administrator Darrell Hofland said one of the center's two diving boards will be shut down and eventually may be eliminated altogether sometime if the AquaClimb gains substantial popularity.