

NIEHS inaugurates new facilities for fitness, research, and training

By Kelly Lenox

A lively gathering of NIEHS staff kicked off the new year at a Jan. 8 open house for newly remodeled space in the main building. NIEHS and NTP Director Linda Birnbaum, Ph.D., opened with a few brief words.

"The whole objective [of the remodel] was to get us more usable, more functional space that we would all live in and enjoy," she explained.

The new area includes a library, expanded fitness center, new training room, work/life office, and the Bioinformatics Team.

Bigger and better - and still free

Program manager Stephanie Bullock-Allen enthusiastically showed off the fitness facilities, encouraging employees to sign up for access, register for recreational sports teams, and pick up a calendar of classes. A raffle kept the curious streaming in.

At more than 2 1/2 times the size of the old space, the fitness center, both convenient and free, has a variety of fitness equipment, as well as plenty of room for exercise classes.

The best for work and life

A new work/life office accommodates a career counselor, Gordon Folger, and the NIH ombudsman, when on site. Keeping with the fitness theme, Folger handed out surveys to determine whether staff were keeping careers fit, too.

Bioinformatics team united

David Fargo, Ph.D., director of Integrative Bioinformatics, is pleased that the group is finally gathered in one place. The new workspace is designed to facilitate teamwork, as the staff provides bioinformatics and computational support to NIEHS researchers.

Top-notch training room

Though no one minded the sun pouring in on that frigid day, Roy Reter of the Computer Technology Branch demonstrated the light-blocking blinds, designed to ease eyestrain on the laptops. Besides training, the audio and video equipment in the room also supports videoconferencing.

Partners in research

The NIEHS library team used the roadmap theme of their motto (see [text box](#)) to educate staff about their services.

"Now that there is so much information out there, we can help you navigate it, by providing help finding articles. Or, if you're doing a literature search, we can help you decide which databases to use or which keywords to select, because many scientific databases use very specific vocabularies," explained library manager Erin Knight. "We can save you time and frustration."



Birnbaum, who minutes earlier told the crowd, "I look forward to seeing some of you down here, as one of my resolutions is to use this fitness center," wasted no time signing up with Bullock-Allen. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



Smoothie samples - and recipes - were on hand, whetting the palate of many, including raffle winners April Parker, left, and Leslie Lynch. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



Ming-Lang Zhao, M.D., didn't let visitors keep him from his workout. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)

"To ask why we need libraries at all, when there is so much information available elsewhere, is about as sensible as asking if roadmaps are necessary now that there are so many roads."

-Jon Bing, J.D., professor of information technology law, University of Oslo

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