



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

## Harckham Attends Grand Opening of Van Cortlandtville Elementary School Fitness Center

PETE HARCKHAM April 20, 2022

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*Mohegan Lake, NY* – New York State Senator Pete Harckham attended the grand opening of the new Fitness and Strength Training Center at Van Cortlandtville Elementary School today, along with Lakeland Central School District administrators, teachers and students.

The new fitness center at the school is the culmination of a three-year effort to modernize the indoor gym equipment and make it inclusive for all students, including those with unique abilities. Harckham was able to secure \$25,000 in state funding for the project.

All of our students thrive when given an opportunity to exercise their muscles, minds and sociability,” said Harckham. “At this new fitness center, these opportunities will be available every school day, rain or shine. So, I am glad to see this project come to fruition, and thank and congratulate the educators, parents, students and other advocates who helped make this possible.”

Van Cortlandtville houses the majority of the Lakeland Central School District’s elementary school-aged students who are in the Aspire Program and require a very small student to teacher ratio in response to their special needs. The school has at least one self-contained class in each grade for children who present with attention, focus and sensory needs that are best met with movement that involves deep pressure and heavy work to calm and regulate their sensory systems.

In 2019, Margaret Rogers, a now retired physical therapist for the school district, reached out to Harckham about the need for the gym equipment for the school’s students with unique abilities. The indoor fitness center, which utilized the remaining \$13,000 of state aid that Harckham secured for the school district, will allow these students to access this type of movement on a daily basis, regardless of the weather, helping them build strength, modulate their emotional state and maintain focus, as well as have fun with their peers.

“The long-awaited grand opening of our Fitness Center today was a true celebration of wellness in our school,” said Jacqueline Woodruff, Principal, Van Cortlandtville Elementary School. “We’re so grateful to Senator Harckham for joining us today and for his long-standing support of Van Cortlandtville and our students.”

“Health and fitness are key components to our students' well-being and we’re thankful to Senator Harckham for his support and visit today,” said Dr. Karen Gagliardi, Superintendent, Lakeland Central School District. “The addition of the fitness center provides all Van Cortlandtville students with the opportunity to establish healthy habits and thrive in school.”