

## **YWCA set to swim alone**

**YMCA's choice not to keep leasing the pool has women's nonprofit eager to move forward.**

By Jason Wells LA Times

NORTHEAST GLENDALE — YWCA of Glendale officials are preparing for a Jan. 1 transition that will not only see them regain operation of their pool facilities, but will give them a chance at image rejuvenation.

The YMCA of Glendale decided last year not to sign a three-year extension on its lease with the YWCA for control of the pool facilities there after the women's organization decided to adjust its prices to market rate, YWCA Executive Director Richard Burrell said.

For the last seven years, the YMCA has been the primary operator of the pool facilities and gym on Lexington Drive for \$5,000 a month, well below market value, Burrell said.

But when the YWCA adjusted the price for the three-year extension to \$15,000 per month last year, the YMCA decided it couldn't afford it, he said.

With the contract now set to expire Dec. 31, the YWCA is knee-deep in renegotiating rental agreements at the higher rates with program operators who will continue to use space in the adjoining building and gym, Burrell said.

But despite concerns from some YMCA members that the transfer will mean fewer programs and overcrowding at the YMCA's Louise Street campus, officials for both organizations said the lease's end will be a win-win in terms of increased revenue, cost-savings and program management.

"We're a nonprofit, they're a nonprofit, and when the bottom line comes, we all have to make our budgets meet," said Carol Ann Burton, president of the YWCA board.

But the battle of the nonprofit bank account isn't the only driving force behind leasing decisions, officials for both organizations said.

For an organization that has prided itself on keeping its domestic violence services under the radar — mostly to protect clients' identities — maintaining a public profile has often been challenging.

In regaining full control over the operation of its facilities, the YWCA will consolidate some of its outside programs under one roof and use the community recreation portion of the property as an avenue to increased visibility, Burrell said.

"We're moving forward in a very strong fashion," he said.

The YWCA found strength in its fiscal year 2006-07 report that put the nonprofit in the black for the first time in five years, he said.

Burton described the YWCA's current situation as a phoenix rising out of the ashes.

"We find it, on our board, a very exciting prospect — that we'll return to the YWCA of the past," she said.

That will mean more recreation programs for a wider cross-section of patrons beyond the low-income children and woman-dominated clientele of the past seven years, she added.

It will also represent a more entrepreneurial take on maximizing what the organization has, Burrell said.

Having full control puts the YWCA in a better position to secure what could be \$700,000 for capital improvements to the pool and adjoining facilities, he said. It also means more latitude in setting future lease and rental terms that will contribute to the nonprofit's financial stability, he added.

"And that is where you get survival," Burrell said.

John Thomas, chief executive officer for the organization, shared that economic outlook, pointing out that the YMCA will no longer be responsible for the cost of infrastructure maintenance and other operating expenses as it consolidates its own programs.

"It is a very old pool, and it needs a lot of upkeep," he said.

Almost all of the YMCA's current recreation programs will remain, either at its Louise Street location or as separate operations under new rental agreements at the YWCA's Lexington Drive site, Thomas said.

About 40% of the YMCA's swimming programs will be cut to fit the schedule of the Louise Street pool, he added, but the organization is looking into renting time at the YWCA pool depending on scheduling there.