

## A place to call home



Photo by Daniel Freel/New Jersey Herald

Erin Walsh, 11, left, and Erin Scott, 12, right, both of Sparta, practice rebound shots with their sixth-grade basketball team Wednesday at the Sparta Police Athletic League gym on Station Road in Sparta. After Dermody Associates purchased the property, Hance Construction renovated the former industrial building and historic train station into the PAL's new facility.

## Sparta PAL now in new recreation complex

By JESSICA MASULLI REYES

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SPARTA — The Sparta Police Athletic League has found a new home in what was once an abandoned industrial building and historic train station near Station Park.

Dermody Associates, a father-son developer team from Sparta, has taken a dilapidated industrial area and turned it into the new Station Park Recreation Complex for the PAL and other future renters.

"This just gives us our own home," PAL Director and Sparta Police Chief Ernie Reigstad said. "It gives us 365-day use."

The new complex on Station Road contains four structures, including the historic train station from the 1880s, on 10 acres of property adjacent to the park. Reigstad said the area used to be a "headache" for police because of the fires, trespassers and vandalism that often occurred at the abandoned buildings.

"It was the ugliest thing in town and now it is a beautiful park setting," Reigstad said.

In 2007, Dermody Associates pur-

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chased the land with hopes of revitalizing the area. Phase 1 of the project sought to turn the industrial building into 6,950 square feet of space for the PAL. Hance Construction, of Washington, N.J., constructed the facility to look somewhat industrial, but modernized with metal walls and roofs.

"We worked with the Dermody team to make sure the facility met their needs and the end result is a highly sustainable environment-friendly facility," president of Hance Construction Art Hance said. "The Station Road project is a good example of the fact that metal roofs and walls offer an unbeatable level of environmental performance and

aesthetic appeal."

Hance said the metal building has less impact on the environment, reduces solid waste in construction, helps reduce energy usage, and improves air quality and water efficiency.

Phase 1 was recently completed and the first renter, the PAL, was able to move in and start using the indoor basketball facility about two weeks ago. Since then, the PAL has held several basketball practices in the gym and has had one birthday party in the multi-purpose meeting room.

Reigstad said the location is perfect for the PAL since it is close to Station Park. The PAL has been holding practices and events at local schools for decades, but having a dedicated space will mean easier scheduling and more possibilities. PAL is a non-profit and is able to rent the space using donations.

"We are excited that this property has been reclaimed for use by the community," Bill Dermody IV, of Dermody Associates, said.

See PAL, Page A5

## PAL

Continued from Page A4

Two other spaces are available for rent from Dermody Associates including the 1,100-square-foot white building that was an active train station from the 1880s until the 1960s. The train station is being renovated as part of Phase 2 so that an office, shop or small restaurant can take over the space.

"We don't know what the train station will be yet," Dermody said. "I don't want it to sit for another 100 years. It will be a great home for somebody."

Dermody said when he and his father bought the property three years ago they wanted to save the train station that was in desperate condition.

"It's one of the last stations standing in Sussex County of the 15 built by the New York, Susquehanna and Western Railroad," Dermody said.

Dermody hopes the area can be rezoned as recreational use. After the industrial building was abandoned, the township changed the zoning to residential, but a developer never built houses because of the proximity to the train tracks.

Dermody received use variances to allow for a recreational building at the site, but he hopes to eventually have the area rezoned. A

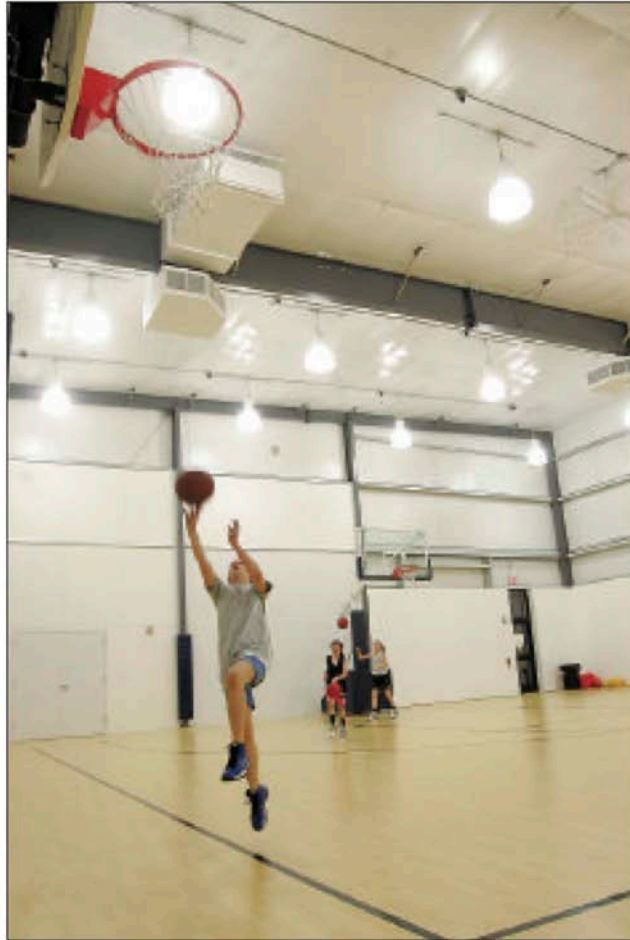


Photo by Daniel Freel/New Jersey Herald

**Nicole Scakera, of Sparta, practices a layup with her sixth-grade basketball team at the Sparta Police Athletic League gym on Station Road in Sparta Wednesday.**

4-foot high fence with spikes is also being constructed around the property so that children cannot get near the train tracks that run directly behind the new building.

Anyone interested in renting the multi-purpose meeting room, which will soon have a kitchenette, can contact Ernie Reigstad at [ernie@spartapal.com](mailto:ernie@spartapal.com).