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Train Operator Ruben 'Running Wolf' Hernandez led the effort to transform an office into a fully-equipped gym at the Metro Gold Line Midway Yard. *Photos by Gayle Anderson*

## Sweat Equity: Gold Line fitness buffs, present and future, build fully-equipped gym at the Midway Yard

By Laura Kloth  
Staff Writer

(April 21, 2009) A dream to build a fully equipped gym at the Metro Gold Line Midway Yard became reality this month thanks to a division-wide effort by operators, office staff and Gold Line leaders.

"We wish to express our heartfelt appreciation for your generosity and giving your time and support in completion of the Gold Line Gym," said Rail Operator Ruben "Running Wolf" Hernandez during the April 10 grand opening. "To all those who donated and contributed their time and talent, thank you with all my heart. "

Hernandez, who led the effort, presented a plaque to Mike Cannell, Metro General Manager of Rail Operations, and afterward, read off names of those who contributed money and time to

create the facility at 1800 Baker Street.

Set along a backdrop of wall-sized mirrors, the \$4,000 gym includes a pull-up rack, a punching bag, a treadmill, scale, weight benches and hundreds of pounds of weights.

Maintaining a theme of mind, body and spirit, the room also has a designated yoga area along with inspirational art and accessories like medicine balls and weight bars.

Train Operator Dan Denkins said the room would be a welcoming oasis for drivers and staff who need “an outlet” to help maintain their health while alleviating stress after a long day of work and driving.

“We all put it together,” he said. “We just gradually put things in here place by place, and certain products needed painting. We had a couple of guys in their off time paint. A lot of the equipment came from donations and had to be reupholstered.”

Along with the sweat equity, contributors donated \$1,800 adding to the \$2,200 in personal gym equipment brought in by Hernandez.

“It turned out to be nicer than I thought and that’s a nice set of weights by the way,” said Cannell as he explored the room.



Rail GM Mike Cannell does the honors at the opening of the Gold Line Gym. Below, Running Wolf gives tribute to Cannell in appreciation of his support that contributed to the completion of the grassroots effort to build a gym at the Midway Yard.



Below, Sr. Service attendant Frances Hammond suspends her own weight for a grueling 30 seconds and walks away with a new Gold Line Gym record.



Cannell said he was touched by the plaque because it came from Hernandez, who has become the subject of his inspirational chats with new rail operators. Cannell often tells new graduates about how Hernandez's pleasant disposition as a rail operator when he "moves the world with a smile."

Hernandez also thanked Thomas Jasmin, Rail Division Transportation Manager and Ken Arvidson, Wayside Systems Manager, Gold Line Fleet Services.



Gold Line Gym members cherish the moment of the long-awaited official opening. The names of contributors and a timeline are inscribed on the board behind. From left, Juan Villalba, Frances Hammond, Carolyn Grant, Hector Garcia, Rail Division Transportation Manager Tom Jasmin, Running Wolf Hernandez, Rail GM Mike Cannell, Tom Cowan and Ricardo Hernandez. Not pictured: Dan Denkins.

"Mr. Thomas Jasmin, we thank you for bringing our vision to a reality," he said.



Jasmin said he was impressed by the positive initiatives throughout the division, and recalled how operators held a luncheon for Transit Operations Supervisors and managers.

"I've never heard of the operators giving management a luncheon and a plaque. We all got plaques individualized with our names," Jasmin said.



Set along a backdrop of wall-sized mirrors, the Gold Line Gym includes a pull-up rack, a punching bag, a treadmill, scale, weight benches and hundreds of pounds of weights.

Although attempts were made over the past six years to build the gym, it wasn't until Cannell arrived in 2007 that the idea began to take form, Hernandez said. The most recent obstacle involved a problem with the room's ventilating system and that was finally corrected before the opening.

Division 21 employees joined Cannell as they tried out some of the equipment, and watched as Cannell jumped on the treadmill checking out the streets of Italy on a makeshift DVD. They cheered him on as he completed a one-arm pull-up.



Maintenance Specialist Ricardo Hernandez holds out for a record-breaking 3 1/2 minutes on the 12-pound exercise bar.

During an impromptu contest, Maintenance Specialist Ricardo Hernandez defeated car pool buddy and fellow employee Mike Gonzales when he held a 12-pound bar directly in front of him for what seemed like a sweaty eternity of 3-1/2 minutes.

“Now you have bragging rights,” his coworkers yelled out.

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