Welcome to the Mirenda Center for Sport, Spirituality and Character Development

• 72,648 square feet
• 1 classroom
• 1,400 seats in the main gymnasium bleachers
• 6,800-square-foot Community Hall
• Men’s and women’s team locker rooms with 496 lockers
• Air conditioned with a full sprinkler system
• Indoor running track

Exhibits in the main lobby are one of the features that set the Center apart from other athletic facilities. The themes of the pillars are balance, beauty, play, reflection and respect.
Not even a nor’easter could dampen the spirits of the Neumann family on October 17 as the University opened its new Mirenda Center for Sport, Spirituality and Character Development with a blessing and ribbon-cutting ceremony. The building is named after Dr. Rosalie Mirenda, president of the University, and her husband Tony. Dr. Mirenda has been with Neumann since 1973 and president for the last 13 years.

Cardinal Justin Rigali, Archbishop of Philadelphia, blessed the facility; State Senator Dominic Pileggi and State Representative Stephen Barrar offered congratulations on behalf of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; and Jay Devine, chairperson of the University Board of Trustees, recognized the many Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia at the event, thanking them for their 44 years of support and donation of 13 acres on which the Center sits.

In a letter sent to the Board of Trustees shortly after the opening, the Mirendas wrote: “We accept this honor and recognition by the Board and the Members of the Corporation in the name of all those who sacrificed, labored in love, and supported the creation of this precious Catholic Franciscan Higher Education ministry. Partnering with you in leading Neumann University forward is truly a privilege and responsibility we take seriously and hold dearly. We pray that we can continue to lead with passion and energy because this mission and the students we serve deserve the very best of our efforts.”

Designed to be more than an athletic center, the building uses exhibits and storytelling to provide a new perspective on sports, one that goes beyond the obvious element of competition to address the myriad ways in which students learn life lessons and develop character through athletics.

Inside the main lobby that stretches across the entire façade of the Center, visitors will find five illuminated pillars, each of which is home to an exhibit that focuses on examining sports in conjunction with a specific theme. The topics of play, beauty, respect, reflection, and balance guide the content of the exhibits, which explore the connection between sports and spiritual growth.

Content ranges from the humorous to the heartwarming. One exhibit tells the touching tale of Sara Tucholsky of Western Oregon University. After she hit her first career home run in a game against Central Washington, she collapsed with a knee injury at first base. In a generous act of sportsmanship, two players from Central Washington’s team carried the injured Tucholsky around the bases so she could complete her home run.

Images of, quotes by, or stories about Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, John Cappelletti, Roberto Clemente, Babe Didrikson, Lou

Church and State came together to celebrate the event. Cardinal Justin Rigali blessed the facility and State Senator Dominic Pileggi offered congratulations from Harrisburg.

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In the best tradition of Big Five basketball, the crowd showered the Center with blue and gold streamers at the October 17 opening.

After coordinating the blessing and ribbon-cutting ceremonies, Board Chairperson Jay Devine called the Mirendas to the stage. This sequence of photos captures Dr. Mirenda’s reaction to the announcement that the building would be named in honor of her and Tony.

At the end of the festivities, the Mirenda family gathered on the floor of the main gymnasium and shared their happiness for Dr. Mirenda and Tony.
Exhibit Excerpts

From the Exhibit Vision Statement

The Catholic Franciscan values of play, beauty, respect, reflection and balance guide the content. Exhibits take the form of storytelling, interactive engagement, inspirational images, and shared personal experiences. They explore the connection between sport and spiritual development, and they offer a message that widens the understanding of sport to include personal reflection on the connection between the body, mind, and spirit.

Quotes from the Exhibits

**Balance:** “Sports are not merely the exercise of muscles, but … training in courage, in perseverance, and in overcoming laziness and carelessness. These values are of greatest interest for the formation of a personality which considers sports not an end in itself but as a means to total and harmonious physical, moral and social development.”
— Pope John Paul II

**Play:** “You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.”
— Plato

**Reflection:** “Today I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth.” A grateful Lou Gehrig spoke these words on July 4, 1939, the day of his retirement from baseball. Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) shortened his playing career and ended his life.
— Lou Gehrig

Story, Sport and Spirit: May 19-21 Conference

The Institute for Sport, Spirituality and Character Development will host its first conference on May 19-21, 2010. Entitled *Story, Sport and Spirit: A Conference to Explore the Theory and Practice of Storytelling in Athletics*, the three-day event will include some noteworthy speakers:

- **Fr. Jim Bacik**
  Professor of Humanities, University of Toledo

- **Tom Brennan**
  Retired ESPN Analyst; Former Men’s Basketball Coach of the University of Vermont

- **Theresa Grentz**
  Member of the Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame; 1992 Olympics Head Women’s Basketball Coach

- **Dr. Clark Power**
  Professor of Liberal Studies, University of Notre Dame

- **Sherry Retif**
  Head Coach, Germantown Academy Girls’ Basketball

- **Adam J. Taliaferro**
  Founder of the Adam Taliaferro Foundation; subject of the book *Miracle in the Making*

- **Dr. Ronan Tynan**
  Classical singer; former member of the Irish Tenors; motivational speaker

- **Jay Wright**
  Head Coach, Villanova University Men’s Basketball

For additional information about the conference, call the Institute at 484-840-4707 or email isscd@neumann.edu.