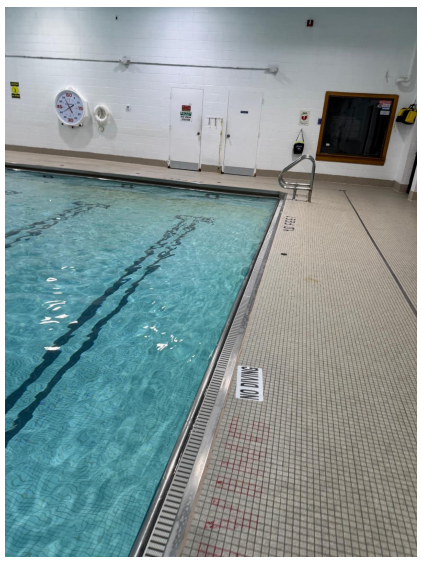
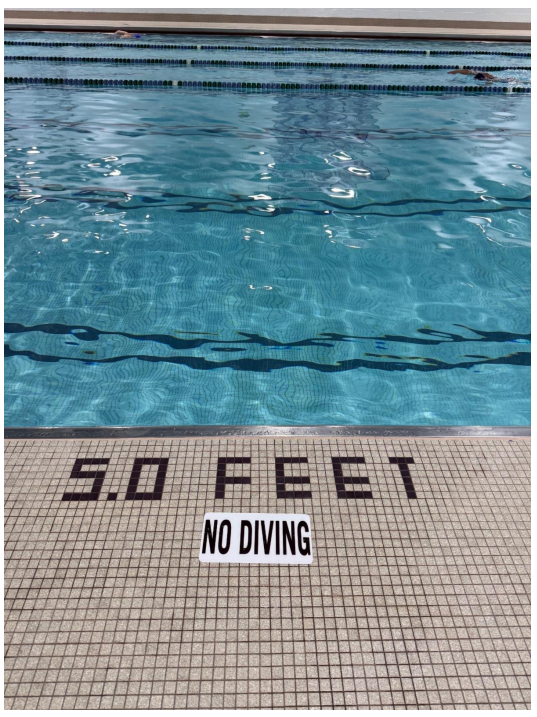


YMCA of Alaska was originally formed due to a growing community need and was an offshoot from the Armed Services YMCA in the 1960's. It started as the Anchorage Community YMCA. Land was donated in mid-town Anchorage by Jim and Joan Flood in 1974 and fund raising began with the goal of building a Gym and Swim facility. There was an immediate need for a pool and that was included in the original design.

Nate Root, who was previously the GM of six of the Alaska Clubs chain, took over the operation of the Dimond Athletic Club in 2018 and shortly thereafter, that facility became another YMCA branch and so began Nate's tenure with YMCA Alaska. Now he is the COO in charge of all 3 YMCA Alaska pool operations, Otis and Southside in Anchorage plus swim lessons from the Wasilla School Pool.

Alaska is not only geographically isolated but is also a demographic melting pot which in and of itself presents diverse needs. Accordingly, they don't turn anyone away and charge fees according to means with their "Open Door Program". They offer similar programs to other YMCAs around the country but their approach to building community is very much done the Alaskan way. They provide a space for people to meet who otherwise wouldn't get to do so. Some people drive over an hour, 5 days per week, to get to the facility, some fat tire bike in all weather. They provide the 8 acres of land behind the facility for use to the Special Olympics organization and this doubles as a Cross-Country skiing facility for others.

We sat down with Nate to discuss their Aquatics program and their history with TMI. They have been a TMI customer since 2004. This included a short time frame where Larry Parker, CEO, switched away from TMI to buy online to save money but came back to TMI in a few short years stating that he was a "reformed tightwad". You can read about Larry's experience **here**. Nate's feedback was: *"You get what you pay for. For all YMCA's, it is critical that we have partners who understand our mission, want to support our mission and have the wherewithal to support that as TMI has done for many years! Working with TMI and their system has many benefits. About 4 years ago, we brought in a new Aquatic Director at our Lake Otis facility. The person we hired was experienced in programming but not in pool management. Because of the TMI system and the support from TMI, we were able to maintain clean, clear water while she was learning the ropes while TMI trained her remotely. With any other system, this wouldn't have been the case."*




Nate's position on buying online was that even if they were able to find less expensive parts online, they wouldn't get the knowledge and support that TMI provides. TMI is always at the forefront of new technology and can help with all decisions about pool equipment, renovations and upgrades.

*"**TMI has been a true partner in operations.** You guys seem to care about the pools as much as we do. Your ability to communicate and help us get what we need to solve our problems and keep our pools running smoothly, makes you, first and foremost, a partner. If I spoke with any YMCA Counterpart around the country, I would say that 'I don't know what you are using now but you should be using TMI'. I'm happy to provide a reference for anyone. It's just a no-brainer. Most YMCA's struggle to find partners. Everyone at TMI comes from a Partnering perspective rather than a vendor perspective. Since Larry was reformed, **we don't shop around anymore for anything to do with the pool, we just come to you**!"*

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