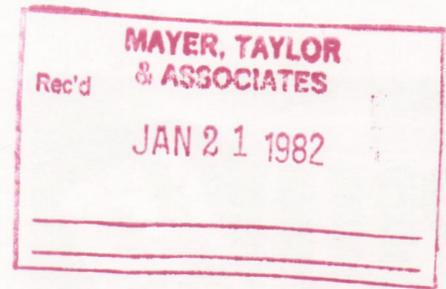


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CONTENTS



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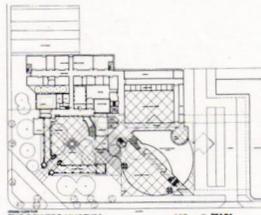
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**The Nicolaysen Center, A School for
Exceptional Children**, by David Ruhnau,
AIA. **14**



**Timpany Center, A Humanistic
Statement**, by Don Manzagol, *AIA*. **16**



Barrier-Free Attitudes, by Jeanette Harvey. **18**

Interview: Charles A. Jewett. **20**

CCAIA '82: The Architect and the Office. **22**

Departments:

On the Move: City Builders **2**

News **4**

**Points of View: Early Learning Environ-
ments**, by Sanford Hirshen, *FAIA* and
Melinda Martin, *M.A.* **8**

**Commentary: Disability or Access?, by
H. David Sokoloff, *AIA*.** **13**

**From the Floor: Barrier-Free Design—
It's the Law**, by John Arthur Raeber, *AIA*. **28**

Cover:

The El Cajon Civic Center and City Hall,
designed by The Blurock Partnership and asso-
ciate architect Art Decker, *AIA*. Photograph by
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Timpany Center, A Humanistic Statement

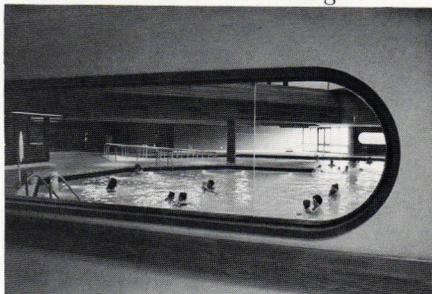
by Don Manzagol, AIA



The major program requirement for the Timpany Center in San Jose, California, was to create a totally barrier-free facility in which physically and mentally handicapped persons of all ages could participate in physical education and recreation experiences. The Center is humanistic in design, scale, aesthetics and overall environment. We at Porter.Jensen.Hansen. Manzagol Architects, AIA wanted this building to be a statement of humanism—a comfortable environment rather than a sterile institution.

Timpany Center looks more like a private club than an institution. The facility fosters a sense of independence for handicapped persons who experience a variety of physical activities and develop skills and self-confidence. The Center balances the need to educate and train the handicapped to cope with the real world and the need to release them from their handicaps.

The facility has received a number of awards, including the 1979 Honor Award from the Santa Clara Valley Chapter, AIA and the 1980 Shirley Cooper Award from the American Association of School Administrators and the AIA, signifying the best educational facility architecture in the country for that year. The jury for the Shirley Cooper Award described the Timpany Center as an "architectural gem."

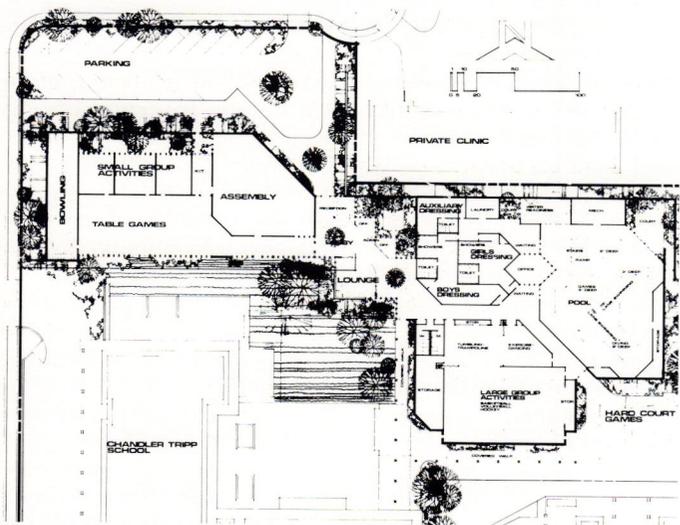


Over 1900 people in dozens of special education programs throughout Santa Clara County use the Timpany Center for their physical education and recreation needs. Age groups using the Center range from 18 months to 21 years. The Center is located

next to three facilities for the handicapped—the Chandler Tripp School for orthopedically handicapped, the Hope Center for mentally retarded adults, and the Joseph M. McKinnon School for Trainable Mentally Retarded. Santa Clara County Valley Medical Center is nearby. Staff from these centers, the County Superintendent's Office, and the San Jose Parks and Recreation Department were among the hundreds of professionals, parents and handicapped individuals involved with us in planning the Timpany Center.

Timpany Center is built on a restricted site of small, irregular shape, almost hidden by existing buildings. Site design required integrating the Center into surrounding special education facilities, promoting shared outdoor activities with these facilities, and providing barrier-free pedestrian access to and from these facilities. The plan also had to provide for future construction at the Center to include bowling lanes, a full kitchen and serving area, a large activity auditorium with stage, and several optional spaces for offices and a fitness center.

Energy considerations had a strong influence on the building design. High sloping roofs pitched at 45 degrees accommodate active solar collectors on the south and clerestory windows on the north. Wood trellising shades windows with southern and western exposures. Natural daylight is emphasized at Timpany



Don Manzagol, AIA is an architect-partner in the San Jose firm of Porter.Jensen.Hansen.Manzagol Architects, AIA. He was principal in charge of design for the Timpany Center.

Center. Tall wood roof monitors bring north and east light into the lobby area, and windows are strategically located to create visual and spatial experiences.

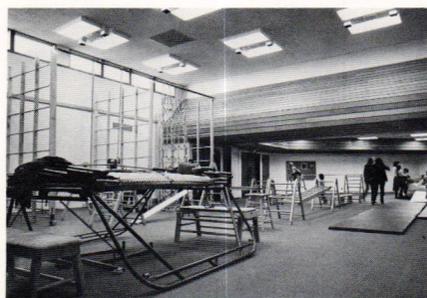
Natural redwood boards and stucco are the primary exterior materials. The bermed earth walls surrounding the building for insulation are planted with jasmine and bougainvillea to create a garden atmosphere. Covered walks, enclosed courts and landscaping reinforce the exterior-interior relationship.

Facets in the Gem



Major functional planning elements of the Timpany Center consist of a reception-lounge-office area, gymnasiums, swimming pools and dressing areas. The reception-lounge-office area, reached through a redwood canopy entrance, is a warm, calm environment created by redwood columns, exposed beams, fireplace and soft earth-tone colors. The area has an especially firm carpet for wheelchair ease. The garden-like feeling is continued inside the building with trees growing in circular planters. The planters are upholstered to form seating areas.

Activity spaces in the Timpany Center include a gymnasium, a tumbling and gymnastic area, a movement exploration area and two pools. Specially designed equipment in the gymnasiums encourages children to explore, solve problems and learn psychomotor skills. The smaller rooms for gymnastics and trampoline have carpeted floors and walls and built-in, adjustable exercise equipment.



The larger gymnasium houses regular and wheelchair sports which give participants a chance to experience team membership and a sense of individual contribution. The space is adaptable for use by people with varying handicaps. The basketball nets, for example, can be lowered to a height appropriate for players in wheelchairs.

Walls in the gymnasiums are carpeted. Interior soffits are sound absorbing insulation behind natural redwood boards. Mechanical ducts are housed in the soffits. Sound-absorbent ceiling materials are used, and sound baffles are concealed between the redwood planking.

Lighting is especially important in facilities for the handicapped. For example, the pulsations and hum of fluorescent lights can aggravate autistic children, while brain-damaged children may become hyperactive and aggressive under other lighting conditions. Throughout the Timpany Center, we used a combination of natural, incandescent and fluorescent lighting to allow the users various options.

In both the Water Readiness and the Water Learning Pool areas, maximum use is made of natural and soft materials to help create a noninstitutional feeling. All walls in the pool areas are carpeted. Soffits are redwood boards over acous-

tical absorbing material. The pools are daylighted by large skylights which become light fixtures at night.



The Water Readiness Pool provides low functioning individuals with an intimate water environment and helps them feel secure around water. The pool resembles a beach tide-pool, with natural rock walls, waterfalls and water play tables.

Some parents report that, after experiencing the waterfalls, their children go home and use showers they have previously feared and avoided.

An uneven pool bottom varies water depth from 0–12 inches, to gradually ease people into the water. An “island” extending into the pool entices children to venture further into the water. Placing a favorite toy or person on the island can lure timid children into the warm, shallow water voluntarily. Lighting in this pool area can be regulated to change colors and mood.

The Water Learning Pool has graduated depth to allow a natural progression from simple to advanced water experiences. The pool is laid out in a modified X shape with varying depths, widths and lengths. The 8½ foot deep section offers side-of-pool diving. The four foot deep section is the scene of team water games such as water basketball and atlasball. The pool also is designed with two separate 75 foot lengths for lap swimming and racing.



This pool is the site of water learning games, many of which were developed by the staff and teachers who use the Center. Water learning is a multi-disciplinary activity which combines swimming skills with educational games and

classroom concepts such as matching colors, counting objects and remembering a series of directions.

Barrier-free access to the water is provided by ramps, stairs, ladders and handrails. The oak handrails also serve as buffers to prevent wheelchairs from hitting the redwood walls. The access ramp allows direct wheelchair entrance into the pool and enables people to get into the pool without the indignity of being carried. The edges of the pool are a special stippled tile, which give braille-like directions for the visually handicapped.

The Water Readiness and Water Learning Pools provide important opportunities for handicapped people to overcome their fear of the water. The water can release some handicapped people—at least for a short time—from their handicaps. Many children who cannot walk can swim. Having ready access to the pools in the Timpany Center provides these children with a freedom they might otherwise never know.

The Timpany Center could not have been successful without an enlightened client, the Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, who was dedicated to creating a totally barrier-free facility in a noninstitutional environment—and was willing to take chances and go beyond the stereotype materials, methods and spaces generally found in a facility for the handicapped.