

Two area sports training facilities have merged with the potential to double their business, executives say.

Pinnacle Sports on state Route 18 in Granger Township near Medina and The Edge Sports Performance Academy on Ravenna Road in Twinsburg have merged under the Pinnacle name. Both facilities will remain open and expand their offerings.

The two entities joined last month because they both had similar beliefs and missions, said Rich Garbinsky, general manager over both facilities. The administrative offices will be at Pinnacle Medina.

Garbinsky said training at Pinnacle, which is based on a program called Coaching 4 Life, provides athletes with competitive skills, but also places an emphasis on "nurturing young people and developing the character traits they need for success in sports now and for life in general as they mature."

Pinnacle owner Earl Stalter said at first he wasn't interested in merging with another facility because he was busy enough with the growing business of Pinnacle. But owners at The Edge were also using the Coaching 4 Life program and it became clear their missions were similar, he said.

Mike Orazen, one of the owners of The Edge who now is president of Coaching 4 Life, said the integration of The Edge programs and facilities with Pinnacle has been wonderful.

The merger allows Pinnacle to expand its reach to more athletes in Northeast Ohio, said Garbinsky, who spent 15 years as director of CYO Camp Christopher before coming to Pinnacle in 2005.

"We're running training programs to augment the current training done by school teams or clubs or travel teams," he said.

The core business of The Edge was speed and strength training and rental of the facility. The Edge will continue as a brand and operate within Pinnacle at both locations.

Together the two facilities, which are about 30 minutes apart, have 200,000 square feet of indoor space. Pinnacle Medina also has a new 140,000-square-foot outdoor lighted turf field, which provides space for soccer, baseball, softball and lacrosse training programs and games. Training at the facilities is also available for basketball, football, volleyball, martial arts and jump rope.

Pinnacle officials declined to disclose financial details of the merger, but Stalter estimated he has invested \$10 million in the Pinnacle Medina facility since buying it in 2002, including \$2.5 million for the new turf field.

Programs are available for age groups from toddlers through college students. Pinnacle also has some senior citizen recreational leagues, but the core training is mostly for youth athletes, said Garbinsky.

The Coaching 4 Life program, which Stalter and Orazen are partners in separately from Pinnacle, will also eventually offer training to area coaches in the program's principles.

Later this month, the program is offering its first free Captains Leadership Training at Pinnacle Medina for high school captains and coaches. Information is available by calling 330-239-0616. The Web site is <http://www.pinnaclesports.org>.