

Local News

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Teens Have New Place To Chill At Golf Mill

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As a large group showed up Saturday to celebrate the grand re-opening of the Niles Teen Center, village sponsors had to hustle actual teens into the facility before accompanying adults got too caught up enjoying the new tables, shined-up space, and overall quality of the center.

Many said the space is nicer than their own living space.

Teens will have their chance to hang out without parental commentary this fall, as the new location of the center gets going after packing up and moving Aug. 1 from a space near Caldwell Avenue and Howard Street in an industrial section of town to the thriving Golf Mill Shopping Center. They'll find more opportunities at the mall, predicted village officials.

"When the village took over they decided to go in a different direction," said Assistant Village Manager Steve Vinezeano. "If you can get the kids in and get them interacting...the key is to engage them in other activities that allow them to grow as a person."

Participating teens could have visits from the Chamber of Commerce, Niles Senior Center, and Niles Public Library to help them become more community-minded, said Vinezeano. They'll also have all the trappings of a healthy teen recreational life and access to a mall-sponsored job training program.

The new center will also feature a new liaison/chaperone. Mark Williams, 32, was chosen out of many to take the reigns from Clare Whitman as Youth Coordinator after Whitman recently resigned. The youth coordinator is teens' main contact while at the Teen Center, said Vinezeano. Williams has eight years of experience working with teens in education, including some team-building experience.

"Mark has some incredible ideas for the new center and how he plans to engage Niles teens," Vinezeano explained.

The grand opening was well-attended, with appearances by village and township officials, mall representatives, staff, parents, and last but not least, teens. Many had compliments on the innovative idea of placing a teen center in such a teen-relevant location, mentioned Vinezeano. Following a brief ceremony featuring speeches from Williams and elected officials, attendees mingled and enjoyed refreshments, door prizes, and games. The opening was timed to coincide with the grand re-opening of Golf Mill after extensive renovations, a teen-centered program called "Scene Event," and the new Elephant Bar Restaurant.

The Niles Teen Center, located between the Showplace 12 Theaters and Sears, is open 3 to 7 p.m. Tuesday to Friday.

Niles teens (from l. to r.) Jimmy Coakley, Danny McCaffrey, and their pal Subham (no last name given), enjoy a game of Foomball at the new Niles Teen Center. Officials and teens officially opened the center, located inside Golf Mill Mall, on Saturday. *Tom Wessell/The Journal*

