

Home Depot gives \$45,000 to Niles Teen Center

By Kaye Maloney
Staff Writer

Following the approval of an expansion to the Niles Teen Center in April, Home Depot offered to do the construction and provide materials.

The estimated cost of the project is about \$45,000, said Mark Williams, director of the center. In addition to the donation from the construction store, the teen center received money from Wal-Mart and furniture, books, and computer

equipment from the Niles Public Library. They also had help from Golf Mill Shopping Center, where the teen center is located.

With the expansion and new equipment the teen center will be able to continue to provide after-school programs to teenagers in the area, but with more space.

Williams, who worked as a teacher for many years, said there isn't another center like the teen center in the rest of the state. The center offers after

school programs for middle school and high school age students. Students who come to the center find homework help, friends, workshops, library books and computers to utilize.

"I was a teacher for eight years before doing this, it's a lot of work, but it's a whole lot more fun and relaxing than teaching," Williams said. "It's challenging in a different way."

In addition to programs and resources, Williams sees the students benefit in many ways. They have improved self-

esteem, better relationships with friends and family, and a place to go after school, instead of an empty house.

The construction began on June 1 and was completed on June 15. Williams is in the process of gathering funds and trying to have furniture donated to the center. But before an expansion, the center had to move out of the Niles Park District building.

When a telemarketing company moved out of a space in the Golf Mill Shopping

Center, the teen center took the space, said Kim Biederman, a Trustee for the Village of Niles. To expand, the center is now leasing the store next door and knocked down the wall in between.

"We were really fortunate to move forward with the expansion," Biederman said.

She also said other municipalities have been contacting the center to see what they have to offer and how they can provide similar programs to teens in their areas.
