

Story posted Wednesday, June 24, 2009

Teens Take Over Golf Mill

Over 70 teens spent an entire night at the Niles Teen Center's second annual "Lock In" at Golf Mill Mall last Sunday.

"It was amazing," said Teen Center Director Mark Williams. "They can't wait for next year."

The Teen Center underwent a 1,001 sq. ft. expansion and rehab earlier this month when a small army of volunteers from Home Depot and village staffers remodeled an adjoining storefront recently taken over by the facility.

Teens found 12 new computers in the center donated by the Niles Public Library, new reclining sectional sofas and donated gamer rocking chairs.

Williams said more computers are coming in the next few weeks. He said one of the highlights of the evening was when local hip-hop artist Andre B stopped by and entertained.

Kids also ran relay races through obstacle courses, wrapped up as mummies, squared off in video game tournaments, decorated a graffiti wall currently on display, watched the movie "Paul Blart Mall Cop" and feasted on sandwiches.

Last year, Williams used the first annual lock-in night as a recruiting tool, tripling membership at the center.

This year a limit was placed on sign-ups of 100 (though some who signed up did not show for the event) making it less of a recruitment tool.

Still, Williams said he is signing up between four and 10 new members a day and expanded outreach efforts

beyond Niles to schools in Park Ridge and Morton Grove.

Teens living outside Niles pay a higher annual membership fee of \$20 vs. \$5 for Niles residents.

The summer is the peak season at the Teen Center, Williams said. Last summer, in the smaller space, between 25 to 30 teens a day would visit. Williams expects that number to climb to between 35 and 50 per day this summer.



A packed house of local teens invaded Golf Mill Shopping Center overnight Sunday for the Niles Teen Center's second annual "Night-in-the-Mall Lock-In" event. The youngsters had full access to the mall and Teen Center for the sleepover event that included games, food and movies.