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Dance Kicks-Off Teen Center School Year

By TOM ROBB Journal & Topics Reporter

This Saturday, the newly-expanded Niles Teen Center will hold its first event of the new school year: a dance at the Niles Fitness Center.

Teen Center Director Mark Williams expects 200 youths to attend the dance from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. It is open to sixth through ninth graders with entertainment by DJ Dennis and DJ Fred.

Last summer, the Teen Center added 1,001 sq. ft. to its facility when it took over an adjoining storefront in Golf Mill Mall.

Williams is visiting four junior high schools in Niles this week: St. John Brebeuf, Culver, Gemini and Emerson, to let teens know about facilities available at the expanded center.

Along with the new space came new computer terminals. Williams was pleased to see the room filled with teens sitting at the new computers doing homework last week.

New members are joining the Teen Center at a rate of about one teen a day, said Williams.

With the start of the new school year, Williams is also looking for local college students to act as homework tutors. He is also bringing in three intern social workers to be available as counselors and to set up programs.

Last year, the Teen Center worked with two intern social workers who would take walks through the mall with kids when they needed to discuss social or family problems.

Williams said with a new private administrative office in the teen center, social workers would have a better, more private place to counsel teens when needed. Williams also hopes to see group sessions set up so teens can collectively discuss issues.

A grand re-opening of the Teen Center is scheduled for November. Williams said work is continuing on the administrative office and a computer administration system that would both assist administrators at the center and act as a check-in and out system for the satellite Niles Library branch planned to locate in the Teen Center. Additional work might also include new carpeting and paint for the "old" half of the center. After Saturday's dance, the next event hosted by the Teen Center will be a haunted house in mid-October.

The Teen Center is open to teens from sixth to 12th grade and is open to both Niles residents and those living outside Niles. The center is open Tuesdays through Fridays from 3 to 7 p.m.