

Teen Center Celebrates Grand Re-Opening Saturday At Golf Mill

The Niles Teen Center will hold a grand re-opening this Saturday, Nov. 14, after adding 1,001 sq. ft. to its space in Golf Mill Shopping Center last summer.

The addition brought the center's total space to over 2,500 sq. ft.

In addition to the new space, Teen Center Director Mark Williams said businesses have come through with donations he values at between \$75,000 and \$100,000 in new and used supplies for the expanded center.

Among the new supplies are 25 computers, one 55-inch and four 40-inch televisions, lockers, a bike rack, desk chairs and a bumper pool table.

Williams clarified the value at what it would have cost the village to outfit the center with those supplies. The only real expense to the village for the newly-expanded center is an increase in rent of about \$6,000 per year.

The increased size has led to increased use by teens and increased programming options. About 10 more kids per day have been visiting the center since the start of school, said Williams.

Teens can now watch movies on a large flat screen television. Before the renovation about 20 teens could crowd around a smaller television to watch a movie. Now between 30 and 40 teens can watch at once.

Williams said the center can now provide programs and speakers without taking over the entire space allowing teens the option to participate or do their own thing.

Winter programming includes talks by State Rep. Elaine Nekritz (D-57th), Niles police officers, Mayor Robert Callero and even a tai chi class.

The idea for the expanded center came last year when Williams said he worked with the Niles Public Library to apply for a grant to move a satellite library into the center. Though the grant did not come through, the idea of working cooperatively with others did.

The library provided the Teen Center with used computers and books. Other businesses provided furniture for the new space, Wal-Mart provided a grant and Home Depot provided the labor and expertise to do the remodeling project itself.

Williams said the value of the work and supplies provided by Home Depot equaled between \$6,000 and \$10,000.

The Teen Center took over an adjacent storefront earlier this year when it became vacant. Home Depot workers knocked a hole in a wall between the two spaces and did painting and plasterwork along with some teens, Teen Center officials and other village staffers. Village staffers also increased network-computing capacity.

Work was completed last summer with donations coming in since then.

The Teen Center is open to teens from Niles and surrounding communities. Niles residents pay less for an annual membership than out of village residents but both rates are very inexpensive.