

Kids, Businesses Rally For After School Programs

Niles participates in nationwide effort to keep kids safe and out of trouble from 3 to 6 p.m. on school days.

By [Pam DeFiglio](#)

Dozens of teens and pre-teens crowded near the [Niles Teen Center](#) Thursday afternoon, eating snacks, collecting free samples from exhibitor tables and sitting on the floor to hear speeches.

Mayor Robert Callero praised the Teen Center for the opportunities it provides kids, and Niles Police Chief Dean Strzelecki said mothers who work outside the home worry most about their kids from 3 to 6 p.m., the hours between the end of school and the parents' arrival home from work.

As many as 15 million children go to an empty house after school on any given day because the parents are working, according to Strzelecki.

"These children are left unsupervised, which could lead them in many avenues, committing crimes, being victims of crime, car crashes, or worse yet smoking, drinking, or drug use," the police chief said, adding that after school programs such as the Niles Teen Center offer children a constructive alternative.

"These programs reduce crime, increase safety, and foster community pride and ownership," he explained, adding that studies of welfare families indicated boys and girls who did not participate in after school programs are four times more likely to be without high school degrees and less than half as likely to be in college.

In addition to the program, a number of youth-oriented organizations and businesses exhibited at tables just outside the Teen Center, which is located near Entrance 6 of [Golf Mill Shopping Center](#).

They included Cub Scout Pack 175 and Boy Scout Troop 175, the Niles Baseball Organization, [Brunswick Zone](#), [Interclub Academy of Dance](#), the Niles Chamber of

Commerce, MaineStay Youth and Family Services, [Sky High Sports](#), Shim's Martial Arts, Patch.com and others.



Kids gather to listen to Niles Police Chief Dean Strzelecki at the Lights On Afterschool rally. Credit: [Pam DeFiglio](#)



Niles Police Chief Dean Strzelecki gives some facts and figures about why afterschool programs keep kids safe. Mayor Robert Callero, center, and Assistant Village Manager Steve Vinezeano listen to his remarks. Credit: [Pam DeFiglio](#)



Monika Kalicki, marketing manager of Golf Mill Shopping Center, welcomes people to the Lights On Afterschool rally. Credit: [Pam DeFiglio](#)



The rally featured a demonstration from Shim's Martial Arts. Credit: [Pam DeFiglio](#)



Pamela Surber, director of East Maine Elementary School District 63's TLC Afterschool program, tells attendees why these programs are important. Credit: [Pam DeFiglio](#)



Mary Benker, a dance instructor, poses at the display from Interclub Academy of Dance in Niles. Credit: [Pam DeFiglio](#)



Niles Mayor Robert Callero, center, and Assistant Village Manager Steve Vinezeano listen to Pam Surber, director of District 63's TLC afterschool program, talk about the value of the program to children. Credit: [Pam DeFiglio](#)



Ellie Schultz and Vanesa Magdaleno promote Sky High Sports, a new trampoline place in Niles. Credit: [Pam DeFiglio](#)



Tom Settepani, Joe Krueger and Tony Toy tell kids about the Niles Baseball League. Credit: [Pam DeFiglio](#)