

## GOLF MILL: Teen Center doubles in size, adds study room, computer lab

By [TONY BERTUCA](mailto:tbertuca@pioneerlocal.com) tbertuca@pioneerlocal.com

The Niles Teen Center hosted a "grand reopening" Saturday to showcase thousands of dollars' worth of renovations to its newly expanded facility.

The center, which serves 20 to 30 children each day at its Golf Mill Shopping Center home, has doubled in size since the expansion and now features an isolated study room and computer lab.

"There's so much more space for the kids and there's quite a bit less bickering," said Teen Center Director Mark Williams. "Now that I have this bigger space, I'll be able to schedule much more substantive programs and have more speakers and things like that."

Williams said the expansion would not have been possible without generous donations from the local business community. He estimated the center received more than \$50,000 worth of labor and materials from Home Depot.

"They came in and did it for free when it would have been very expensive for me to bring a contractor in here," he said

Wal-Mart also donated five flat-screen TVs and Niles Public Library provided 20 computers.

"We now have a good, isolated study area for the kids," Williams said.

Assistant Village Manager Steve Vinezeano said the center has been thriving under Williams' leadership.

"The only reason we were able to fund something like this in these trying economic times is because Mark was able to go out and work with the business community," he said. "I think it's really nice that people want to create an environment for the kids.

"It's important to find support for these things and we wouldn't be where we are today without Mark's leadership. He's been a blessing to the program."



Lavan Rousseau, 13, of Niles, plays billiards with Dennis Narso, 12, of Des Plaines, Saturday at Niles Teen Center. The center has a game room where youngsters can play with adult supervision, as well as a computer room for study and homework. (Shauna Bittle/for Sun-Times Media)



Ryan Litwin, 12, of Niles, plays "Guitar Hero" Saturday in the game room of Niles Teen Center at Golf Mill Shopping Center. (Shauna Bittle/for Sun-Times Media)



Village Trustee Kim Biederman's daughter, Elizabeth, 2, stands on tiptoes to master the foosball table Saturday at the "grand reopening" of Niles Teen Center in Golf Mill Shopping Center. (Shauna Bittle/for Sun-Times Media)



Niles Teen Center director Mark Williams talks with Lady Villapando and her daughter, Alyanna Villapando, Saturday about the center's hours and programs. Alyanna Villapando, 12, often does her homework in the center's computer room, which was recently expanded and stocked with 10 used computers donated by Niles Public Library. (Shauna Bittle/for Sun-Times Media)



Brendan Concannon, 12, and Alex Jasper, 12, play classic Nintendo on Saturday as other children play "Guitar Hero" and Wii at the reopening of Niles Teen Center at Golf Mill Shopping Center. The center recently took over a neighboring storefront to create an expanded games area funded by donations and grants. (Shauna Bittle/for Sun-Times Media)

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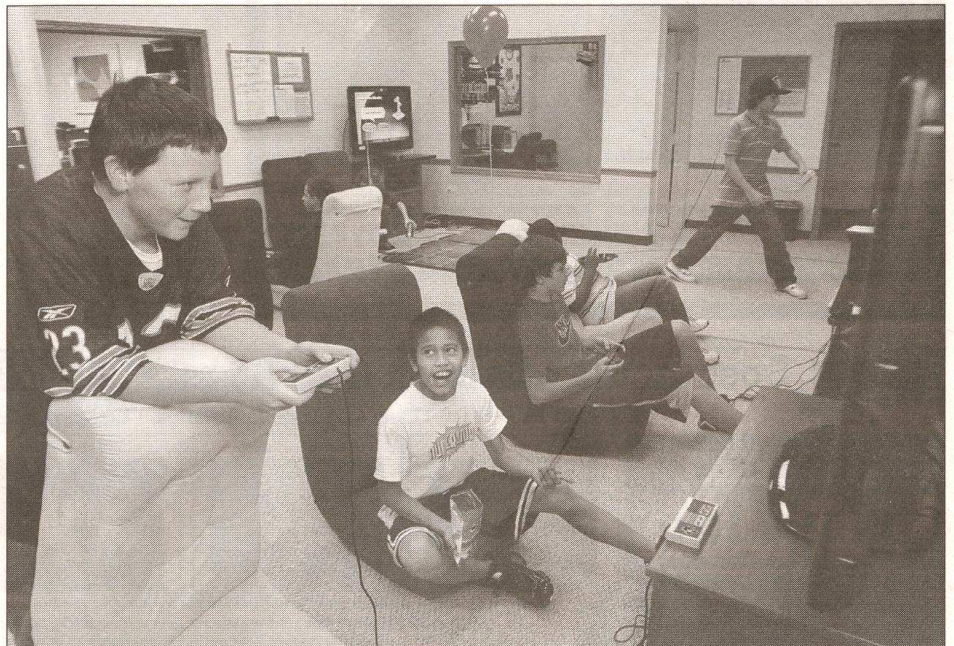
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