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BRAINTREE SCORES WITH NEW YOUTH CENTER: 20-year effort pays off as club for kids opens to the public

By JESSICA TORREZ-RILEY

BRAINTREE - After various groups have tried for more than 20 years to develop a place for Braintree teenagers to gather on the weekends, the Braintree Youth Center opened Saturday night.

Featuring pool tables, Xbox and PlayStation video game consoles, a movie studio and a music hall, the center is a "fun, safe and interesting place," said Jim Tennant, the center's co-managing director.

Tennant's brother, Bill, is the president of the center's board of directors, who helped make the longtime goal a reality, he said.

Growing up in Braintree, Tennant said he never had a place to hang out, and boredom can lead to trouble for some teenagers.

"Some kids do get in some trouble when they have no place to go or nothing to do," he said.

Working with the selectmen and with \$22,800 earmarked for a youth center from the Braintree Rotary, the center was able to open. Membership costs \$10 a year for Braintree residents in grades 7 to 12, he said.

The center will be open Friday nights from 6 to 9 and Saturday nights from 6 to 11. Located above the Marge Crispin Center at 74 Pond St., the center has five separate areas to appeal to different interests and is equipped with a \$4,000 surround-sound system donated by **Advanced Communication Technologies** in Hingham.

Donations and "many generous people" helped make the center possible, and parent volunteers will keep it going, Tennant said. The center needs five parent volunteers along with himself and Amanda Annis, the other managing director, to operate each night.

At the two open house nights this weekend, 27 youths signed up to use the center, but Tennant said he expects that number to grow greatly as the word spreads.

With a capacity to hold about 150 kids, Tennant said he hopes the center becomes "so popular that (they) have to go back to the town and ask for another spot."

Those interested in finding out more or touring the center can come Friday or Saturday night, but parents must be present to sign up their children, he said.

For more information, call the center at 781-228-5361 or e-mail bcyc@beld.net.



Joe Roche plays a game of foosball with his son Austin, 13, while at the Braintree Youth Center Open House on Saturday. (MATTHEW HEALEY/For The Patriot Ledger)