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Another Simulation Station opens

By Ethel Simmons
Staff writer

COMBINING VIDEO and arcade games, as well as fast "fun food," all under one roof is the newest trend in the expanding concept of family entertainment centers.

At the Simulation Station, just opened at Westland Center, young people from tots to teens, along with their parents, can share the pleasure of games and snacks.

Because the station keeps the same hours as the shopping mall, it's an activity that can be paired with a routine shopping expedition. There's enough going on at the station, however, to make it worth a visit on its own.

1. Shortly before the brightly decorated, tastefully done entertainment center opened, Brian Palmer, one of the partners in the operation, toured the premises, pointing out its virtues.

PALMER OF Marine City is in partnership with Roger Secord of Lathrup Village, Gary Kughn of Farmington Hills, Richard Kughn of Detroit, who is chairman, and Bill Browning of Sterling Heights.

They own Simulation Station facilities at the Renaissance Center in Detroit, at Oakland Mall in Troy and in Ann Arbor.

the motion simulator featured at all but the new Westland location. Palmer described the simulator as "an adventure capsule that houses 12 people and provides a visual, sound and motion experience."

But what the Westland station may lack without a motion simulator it makes up for with its chance to play games like Big Rigs.

Palmer said the new game is "based on a Smokey and the Bandit concept, where radio-controlled semi-tractor trailers and police cars chase each other through a maze with sound effects."

The 16-18 inch cars and three-foot-long tractor trailers are maneuvered by control panels that can be manned by Mom, Dad and the kids, in competition with each other or another team.

"THIS IS the first location in the country with the tractor trailers," Palmer said of Big Bles.

Westland also is the first of the four Simulation Station locations, operated by Kinop International, that serves food. A dining area provides seating for 50 people, who can order fast food from a menu that includes the same

The edibles are the kinds that make good finger foods and all are oriented toward takeout. Hot dogs or cheese dogs on a stick, pocket pizza, freshly fried donuts made with sour cream, dough sticks (popular at West Coast

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theme parks), Belgian waffles, chocolate-coated fruit on a skewer, and fruit cups with sundae topping are some of the choices.

Food and games are all paid for with tokens purchased from another kiosk. Palmer said most of the games are

Other family games at Westland's Simulation Station include Boom Ball and Skee Ball, where players rack up points and get prizes if their scores are high enough.

CHILDREN TOO young to play the games can still enjoy themselves in an area filled with kiddie rides.

Parents can even go shopping in other parts of the mall while the children play at the game center. "Uniformed people will be controlling the whole operation," Palmer said.

Besides the family games, there are video games to play. "They're the state-of-the-art, most recent video games," Palmer said. Some are two-person games, others are for a single player. Games will be rotated with those at the other centers.

"Video games are evolving into more sophisticated entertainment. In two years you won't recognize the average video game," he said. "The games are tending toward the simulator, as a total experience of sight and sound."

ASKED WHY the Motion Simulation wasn't used at the Westland location, Palmer said, "There was no place to put it. Also, it doesn't fit in with this concept."

He explained that the rental or selling of computers, tapes and games would be a natural way to expand the centers.

At Westland, the 4,000-square-foot Simulation Station is devoted half to fun food, half to entertainment.

Fast food can be purchased at a kiosk, with tokens bought at another kiosk. A cafeteria area is available, or the snacks may be ordered for carryout.

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