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# They come to play, return for kindness

by Nancy Eriksen

The Ultimate Basement is much more than a game room filled with numerous Xbox, Wii, and PlayStation setups and two pool tables, air hockey and computers.

The owner, David Weisgerber, a father with five kids, saw the Ultimate Basement as a outlet for rural kids with few options to gather and play with others their age. As a Polk county resident of seven years, he has observed local youths gather in parking lots and get into mischief for lack of other outlets.

"We are here for the kids!" said Weisgerber, a computer/GIS specialist by day, and owner/manager/unofficial counselor of the Ultimate Basement, by evening.

The Basement, located at 5965 Hwy. 9 North in Mill Spring just a block from the Sunny View Fire Department, is a flexible community service and music hub that opened in May 2008 where kids of all ages can come to just "hang out," play their guitars, do homework, take a computer class, buy a snack and chat in a safe, monitored environment. This is what you get on the "quiet side," as it is affectionately called.

There is no charge to drop in on the quiet side and the "regulars" often do right after school is out. A small admission is charged to go over to the "louder side" to play video/computer games, pool, and Rock Star – Guitar Hero band games, or hear a live band. Bands that come are high-caliber, up-and-coming Christian rock and pop groups, heavy metal, and even gospel/bluegrass groups from all over the region. The bands are paid 50% of whatever the door brings in.

The performances often end up with low attendance, and the bands earn very few dollars, but they ask to



**David Weisgerber, owner of The Ultimate Basement in Mill Spring**

come back anyway for the experience of working with Weisgerber and his capable, good-natured crew.

The kindness and good treatment that David and his staff extend has been noted on several "indie" or grass-roots musician websites and blogs. More than once, the folks at the Basement have rendered free or below-cost mechanical help, food, medical assistance, and shelter to these travelling musicians.

To get the Basement started, Weisgerber put his savings into buying huge amounts of computer and audio-video equipment and renovated the building to mimic a typical home basement full of games and chairs and couches. With local friends helping, he added a stage platform for Rock band interactive games and live musicians, and set up a small snack counter.

The Basement is drug-free, alcohol-free, curse and conflict-free place. There are rules and kids (and musicians) can be escorted out for breaking them. This is because kids from toddler age and up are welcome. The center is really a family gaming center that does live music some nights - and the youngest rock fan and avid dancer is only four years old!

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 17)

# • Basement

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16)

In the summer there are outdoor games and skate ramps in a fenced area and a video cam to monitor the kids. Last summer the "GERBSTOCK" music fest was put on here.

There is a MySpace site, a web-site and full calendar of events and bands. The bottom line is, this is a worthwhile operation that is offering much-needed activities in a safe and roomy center where kids of all ages are welcome to come mingle, play, pray, compete, challenge themselves, study, make music, and buy refreshments.

People can bring used video games to donate to the Basement in exchange for free play time. With the economy down, the prices have been lowered.

David advises that his landlord has been very merciful and patient, but bills must be paid soon and the utilities keep rising, even with a woodstove burning. Therefore, any volunteer time, firewood, games, equipment, and furniture donations would be gladly accepted.

The Ultimate Basement should



The Ultimate Basement, located on Hwy. 9 North just a block from the Sunny View Fire Department.

not be allowed to vanish into history. As a mother of two boys, I can attest to the safety and friendliness of this center and will be bringing my boys

often. The word needs to get out! For more information, full details of games and band calendar, contact the Ultimate Basement by email (owner@

hightechheaven.net) or by phone (828-625-5544).

Submitted by Nancy Eriksen with permission of Mr. David Weisgerber.

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