

Gym proves kids' exercise can be fun, games

By Michele Gwynn
Contributing Writer

What ever happened to those days when mom said "Go outside and play," and we did, happily and without worry? Those were the days before mom had to work the same hours as dad, children could play in the yard without fear of being snatched and video games didn't hypnotize children into forgetting that physically interactive games of tag and hide-and-seek could be much more fun.

The decline of outdoor play has led to a rise in childhood obesity as well as other conditions related to physical inactivity. But what's a parent to do? Where could their child go for fun that is safe and also provides much-needed exercise so necessary for growing bodies?

Michelle Flores wondered this very same thing. Her concern for her son Zachary's health and her need to work led her to researching online where she found NexGym.

The original NexGym, based in Southlake, Texas, was conceived and put into action in 2006 by franchise president Kevin Bolden. It received rave reviews from children and parents alike.

Flores found both a solution to her desire to work as well as a way to help not only her son, but other children participate in exercise that is also great fun. The result is a NexGym in the La Arcata Shopping Center, Loop 1604 just east of Stone Oak Parkway.

"It helps provide a safe environment for activity and interaction," Flores said. "Parents can drop off their kids for up to two hours each day while they run their



Photo by Michele Gwynn

Claudia Rodriguez practices balancing while playing with the Wii as Ariana Flores and Sofia Rodriguez get down with Dance Dance Revolution in the background at NexGym.

errands. When the moms come back, the kids are happy and sweaty and don't want to leave."

One day at NexGym a group of moms came in together to drop off their children to play and departed to enjoy a ladies' luncheon. Each child couldn't wait to be let loose in the so-called exergaming room.

All exercise equipment is scaled down to suit children ages 6 to 14, and is wired to various video game consoles such as the Xbox and Wii. To play the games, the exercise equipment must be in motion. Coach Ryan Sims said "the kids just love it." NexGym's coaches are skilled in motivating children and are under the supervision of two head coaches trained in kinesiology.

Other games available are Dance Dance Revolution, Makoto, which helps develop hand-eye coordination, Guitar Hero and a treadmill rock-climbing wall.

All games are designed to improve a child's cardiovascular health along with developing core balance.

Competitions are waged to engage the kids in several of the activities. Classes are also available in dance, cardio groove, yoga and Pilates, among other exercises.

NexGym can also be reserved for birthday parties and special events. Flores said any theme can be accommodated and special discounts are given to members. Membership fees are on a monthly basis. There is a \$20-off special for the first 50 members. Child drop-off fees for non-members are \$18 for two hours.

Open since early July, NexGym is open 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. weekdays, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays. As a school season gets under way, hours will change to 2 to 8 p.m. weekdays. The gym will open one hour earlier on Saturdays. For more information call 479-5989 or visit www.nexgym.com.