

'It's all about the kids'

Hi-Five Sports' new outdoor program at Northbrook Court has 'really been amazing' for Glenbrook South grad who runs it

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Operating the 15,000-square-foot Hi-Five Sports Zone that debuted inside Northbrook Court in 2018 was "one of the best times of my life," said Hi-Five owner Danny Tuchman.

Then came March 2020.

"At the snap of a finger we had to close, which is one of the hardest things I've had to do," he said of the result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hi-Five happily is back in action, outdoors on courts in a lot on the mall's northwest corner.

Serving 300 basketball-bouncing, soccer ball-kicking children a week — spaced so there's no more than 25 kids there an hour — again sounds like a good time.

"It's been great, it's really been amazing," said Tuchman, a 2001 Glenbrook South graduate and former Titans basketball player.

"The response has been unbelievable, and it's great not only for the kids but for the parents. Even though they have masks on they're socializing with people who might not have been seeing each other," he said.

Hi-Five, started in 1990 by Tuchman's father, Marvin, as a youth sports camp in Northfield, and since spread by Danny's older brother, Ryan, to franchises in 20 cities nationwide, offers classes and leagues for children from preschool through eighth grade. Classes start for children



Joey Lewnard/jlewnard@dailyherald.com
Zoey Ross, 5, of Highland Park shoots while playing in a basketball game organized by Hi-Five, a youth sports organization, which has set up basketball/soccer courts in a lot at Northbrook Court mall.

at 18 months old.

The outdoor location at Northbrook Court offers two basketball courts nearly the size of a high school court, a mini-sports court with shorter baskets for younger children, and a blacktop court used for soccer and street hockey.

Hi-Five also provides custom "Coach at Home" classes and birthday parties at children's homes.

(The indoor location, since cleaned and equipped with new air filters, has reopened for private classes and small birthday parties.)

"We kind of think about it a little like a Chuck E. Cheese for sports," said Danny Tuchman, whose wife, Michelle, teaches first grade at

Wescott School in Northbrook. Hi-Five even has its own mascot, "Murphy," modeled after a French bulldog.

After the COVID closure, Tuchman said his team "didn't want to stop," so it offered online activities, and then, when able, had camps at people's houses. The business built to 15 camps in the morning, 15 in the afternoon, Tuchman said.

"It really exploded," he said.

Hi-Five had a summer camp at Christian Heritage Academy in Northfield, serving 125 children, without a COVID case among them.

Meanwhile, Tuchman approached Northbrook Court about installing courts outside, aided by Home Court

Advantage of Northbrook. Home Court makes and supplies residential and commercial athletic courts.

"They were, like, that's a great idea," Tuchman said.

The Hi-Five Sports Zone outdoor programs began Aug. 24 with leagues, classes and birthday parties. There's been no problems with social distancing or the wearing of masks by attending parents, Tuchman said.

"It's a great atmosphere. It's very good to see people being respectful of each other and still being able to socialize," he said.

"(That's) what it's all about, everybody working together to minimize risk so we can get back to a normal life. But it's all about the kids."