

Mall's family pit stop expands

Parents and children can hang out in a lounge that has doubled in size.

By STEPHANIE HAYES

Published December 26, 2006

Calling all dirty diapers, screaming kids and throbbing feet - the mall's new family lounge welcomes you with open arms.

Westfield Citrus Park has expanded its sitting area near the food court restrooms. The lounge has three private nursing areas for new moms and five diaper changing stations with heated baby wipes, bottle warmers, hand sanitizer, colorful mobiles, a microwave, Diaper Genies and a diaper machine.

A carpeted play area with chairs includes a flat-screen TV playing children's programs, toys, magazines and bean bag chairs.

"It's an added amenity that we have for shoppers," said Mary Ellen Norton, Westfield Citrus Park's marketing director. "It makes people want to come shopping."

The mall's previous lounge was about half the size and often had a line out the door, Norton said. Nursing stations and changing tables were in high demand.

Hetal Bajaj, 31, lives in Zephyrhills but frequents the mall. She hung out in the lounge with her family recently. It was the first mall outing for her 5-month-old son, Veer.

"I've never been so amazed by anything," Bajaj said of the lounge. "It's so convenient. If I was going to stay for two hours before, now I can stay for six hours."

Allie Leith, 14, came to the lounge with her friend Morgan Brosch, also 14. "When my friends are in the bathroom putting on makeup, I usually come in here and read a children's magazine," Allie said.

The lounge has gotten good reception since it opened just after Thanksgiving. There are similar lounges at Westfield Sarasota Square and Countryside malls, and one is being built at Westfield Brandon, Norton said.

It's part of the Westfield mission to go above and beyond what you'd expect from a mall, she said. "The goal is to enhance the customer experience," she said. "What can we do to make it different, better and special?"

Also coming soon to the mall: a Starbucks store, in addition to a kiosk near the food court; Cork & Olive Wine Tasting and Trading Company; and Dick's Sporting Goods, which should open in the spring.

Norton said the mall entrance near Dick's Sporting Goods, which was shut for construction, is open again.

Stephanie Hayes can be reached at shayes@sptimes.com or 813 269-5303.

[Last modified December 25, 2006, 22:02:44]

ADVERTISEMENT



Put yourself out there.

Submit your photos and videos to our online gallery.

photos.tampabay.com