

Geek Squad HQ gets a razzle-dazzle introduction

PC repair center opens in Hillview

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As a child, Robert Stephens loved the movie "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" and the idea of taking tours of major plants.

Now, Geek Squad City is his own dream come true.



The model Fabio picked up Geek Squad founder Robert Stephens yesterday on the Belvedere. A rally helped celebrate the opening of Geek Squad City in Hillview, which has 400 employees and is expected to employ 600 by the end of the year. (By Bill Luster, The Courier-Journal)

Stephens, the company's founder, helped celebrate the official opening yesterday of the 165,000-square-foot computer-repair depot for Best Buy, known as Geek Squad City.

The Hillview facility has 400 employees and is expected to employ 600 by the end of the year. It will be open for public tours by spring.

Yesterday, dozens of Geek Squad employees descended on downtown Louisville to celebrate the opening in a loud, attention-grabbing show that featured four "agents" rappelling onto the Belvedere from a helicopter, each wearing the short-sleeved uniform and horn-rimmed glasses.

A Geek Squad agent from New York wouldn't say whether the rappellers were Geek Squad employees. "That's classified Geek Squad information," Chris Barnes said.

The event was also a chance to introduce the company's spokesman, model Fabio -- the Fabio of romance novel cover fame.

"I'm a tech buff," Fabio told the crowd, adding that since the Geek Squad helped him go wireless, he now enjoys reading fan e-mail by his Beverly Hills swimming pool and in his gym.

Stephens then stepped in to announce that "the war between geeks and jocks is finally over," before Fabio swept him off his feet like a romance novel heroine.

Stephens also made a serious announcement during the event -- his goal to make all of Louisville's city parks wireless, which Metro Mayor Jerry Abramson warned is an ambitious undertaking.

"We've got 121 parks, buddy," Abramson quipped. Geek Squad will also partner with the city for this year's Light Up Louisville event.

Yesterday, about 100 people got tours of the busy, 24-hour facility in Bullitt County, where nearly 100,000 computers have been repaired since it opened Aug. 21.

The employees alone are a sight. Known as "agents," each wears geek attire -- short-sleeve white shirts with clip-on ties. They also carry badges, a nod to their over-the-top approach to saving the world one computer at a time.

At the facility, which has more than 45,000 computer parts at the ready for all types of computers, one employee said she has been wearing a pedometer, averaging 12 to 15 miles a day. When not replacing motherboards and power sources, the agents hang out in a large break room where they play pingpong, air hockey and Xbox.

Agent Kevin Williams of Jeffersontown played "Call of Duty 2" on an Xbox yesterday. The break room is just one of many benefits of his job, said Williams, who left a job with the Army Corps of Engineers for Geek Squad City. "I love it. I wouldn't trade it," he said.

Derek Keith of Elizabethtown agreed.

"Why would I want to go home after work. I've got everything I want in there," he said.

He left a job in Louisville to work at Geek Squad City and said he couldn't be happier.

"I've always wanted to work in a place like this. I finally got it," he said. "I'll never leave."