

Kids design their dream homes

■ When you put technology in the hands of children in North Miami, they dream not of video stardom but of houses. A home design program is the most popular activity at the city's new Computer Clubhouse in the Valentine Community Center.

BY TIM HENDERSON
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On Friday, 11-year-old Jorley Alcantara designed a three-bedroom brick house with tile roof and arched doorways, and showed how a 3-D design program lets her pan through a children's room with a crib and back outside to a palm-lined yard and swimming pool.

Another girl whispered that she always wanted to be an architect as she panned through her still-roofless house with ceiling fans hanging in mid-air.

The budding architects played with designs Friday at the official opening of North Miami's new Computer Clubhouse program.

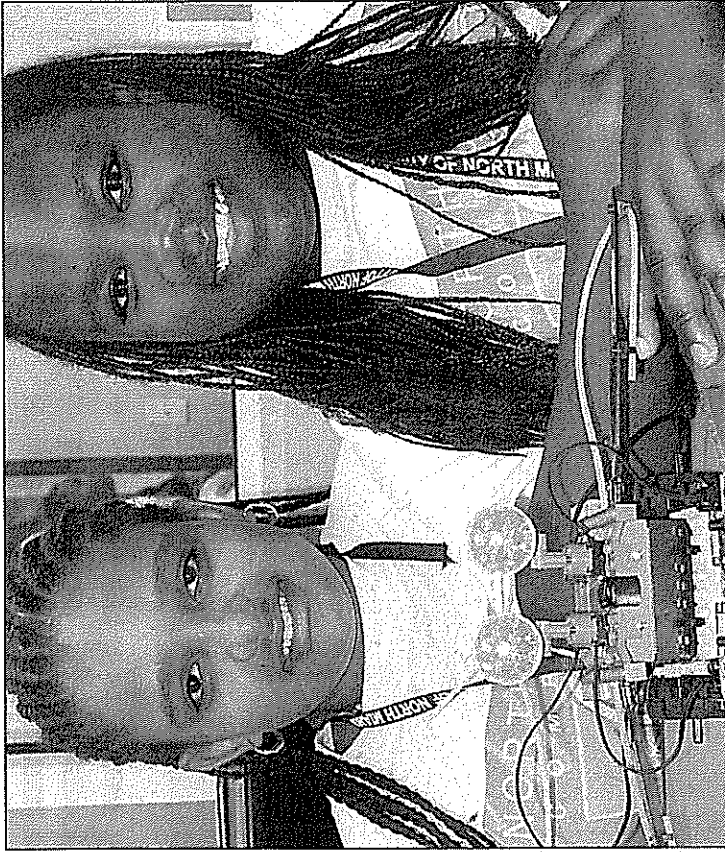
"The home design is really the big thing. That's what everybody wants to do," said Sidney Irvine, who supervises the new program at the Valentine Community Center.

"Sometimes they forget to put in bathrooms. That's OK.

SMART BOX

ABOUT THE CLUBHOUSE

- **What:** North Miami Computer Clubhouse
- **Where:** Valentine Community Center, 13130 NE Eighth Ave.
- **Hours:** 2:30 to 6:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.
- **Details:** Free membership for children age 8 through 18. Volunteer mentors are also needed.
- **For information:** Call Sidney Irvine at 305-892-3024 or e-mail sirvine@littlehaitihousing.org.



COMPUTER CREATIVITY: Stacey Moise and Jenny Casimir show off a robot they made at the new Computer Clubhouse in North Miami.

We can always go back and add more things."

Children working at the dozen computer stations at the clubhouse can also make robots, art and yes, music videos. The program is a joint effort of the city's Parks and Recreation Department, which provides the space, and the Little Haiti Housing Association, which provides staffing. The computers and software are underwritten through government grants and donations.

There are 100 such clubhouses around the world, in a program that started in Boston in 1993. The Little Haiti Housing Association started the state's first Computer Clubhouse, 181 NE 82nd St., in Little Haiti, in 2002.

The goal is to provide an after-school outlet where children age 8 through 18 can have access to technology that might otherwise be out of their reach.

"We're talking about things they normally wouldn't learn until they get to college or a graphic design school," clubhouse manager Carolina Kaufman said. "The clubhouse is designed to make them into designers and creators of technology rather than consumers of technology, as they are almost everywhere else."

The popularity of the home design program doesn't mean the clubhouse is pushing the vor."

association's housing agenda, Sidney and Kaufman said. But it may be a reflection of urgent concerns in families that on average earn \$14,000 a year, enough to comfortably make a rent payment of \$350.

"It really comes from the youths' interests, and as adults, we're just here to help them explore their interests," Kaufman said. "Every clubhouse has its own local flavor."