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## Up Front

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### From Pinball to Pac-Man

Klassic Arcade offers a gallery of playable vintage games

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From left, Lizzy Ketchum, Tina Sivewright and Keenan McFall play pinball at Klassic Arcade.



"It's bigger than it looks," says Kevin Ketchum as he opens the red front door of Klassic Arcade, and he's right.

Inside the light blue metal building on M-40 in Gobles are rows of pinball machines and video arcade games — 65 in all — including *Pac-Man*'s glowing blue maze, light years of alien-infested outer space, and games featuring James Bond and the *South Park* boys, all ready to play. And for \$5, you can do just that, spending all afternoon with pinball and video games of the 1990s, 1980s and earlier.

"People are overwhelmed when they come inside," says Ketchum, Klassic Arcade's owner. "They say, 'Do you have this game?' 'Yes, it's over there.' 'Do you have that game?' 'Yes, it's over there.'"

Ketchum, 59, a lifelong pinball player, started collecting arcade games as a hobby about 20 years ago. At first, it was just a way to surround himself with the games he enjoyed. As his collection grew, he moved it into a three-car garage adjacent to his home. By 2003, his collection required its own storage building, and that became the 2,200-square-foot Klassic Arcade. This summer he's planning to open a second facility in a former pharmacy at 206 S. State St., in Gobles, where he expects to have between 100 and 125 games.

"The new facility is a mile down the road," Ketchum says. "If we do get a busy day, we can just spread the gamers out."

Ketchum has more than 200 games in his collection, including those at Klassic Arcade and some that he's placed in local restaurants and bars like Nino's Pizza in Gobles and One Well Brewing in Kalamazoo.

In addition, he has several more at his home that are waiting to be brought up to a playable state with new electric wiring, improved decorations and more responsive controls. Ketchum, who works in information technology at Borgess Health, does most of the repairs himself but sends out more complicated work to specialists he's met over the years.

Name a classic video game and Ketchum probably has it, including such early 1980s video games as *Galaga* and *Donkey Kong* and pinball games such as *Bride of Pin-Bot* and the movie-themed *Lost in Space* and *Addams Family*. In addition, Klassic Arcade has 15 redemption games, including shooting galleries and *Skee-Ball*, which reward players with tickets that can be exchanged for small souvenirs.

Ketchum also has a few "newer" games like the popular *Mortal Kombat*, from 1992. He even has a copy of a game he grew up playing, 1965's *Buckaroo*, a cowboy-themed pinball game. That one is still at his house.

The first few games Ketchum acquired were purchased from individuals and at conventions, where collectors hunt for early games and parts to rebuild games they're restoring. Video games and pinball games usually cost several hundred dollars, he says. The most Ketchum has paid for a game was \$1,500 for the 1976 video game *Death Race*. He had to drive to Kansas to pick it up, he says, but it was worth it.

"It's a rare game because it was controversial," Ketchum says. "It had cars running over stick people. It's nothing like video games now, but it was controversial then."

From its inception, Ketchum's goal with Klassic Arcade has been to open his collection to the public. The \$5 fee allows players to play all the games as long as they want.

"Instead of playing with a few quarters and then being done, they stay for three or four hours — it's more of a bargain," he says. Ketchum's games at local bars and restaurants still collect quarters from players, and he splits the income from those games with the establishments' owners.

Klassic Arcade also has a remote-control racetrack for high-speed races with toy cars, and it offers more than 100 kinds of root beer, cream soda and other soft drinks.

Klassic Arcade is open afternoons and evenings on Friday and Saturday and afternoons on Sunday. About 100 to 150 people stop in on an average Saturday, Ketchum says, and he's even had a few "arcade stars" visit before, like the New Hampshire man who held the world record for a high score on *Centipede*. But Klassic Arcade games are for everyone, Ketchum says.

"It's fun to watch people enjoy them," he says. "A lot of kids come in, and they've never seen video games (in an arcade) before."

While Ketchum is working on getting his second Klassic Arcade up and running, he doesn't rule out the possibility of a third location, perhaps in Kalamazoo.

"I don't plan on selling any of my games," he says. "I'm more into getting and keeping."

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## Want to Play?

### **Klassic Arcade**

**Location** 22711 M-40, Gobles

**Hours:** 4-8 p.m. Friday; noon-8 p.m. Saturday; 1-5 p.m. Sunday

**More info:** (269) 628-4628 or [klassicarcade.com](http://klassicarcade.com)

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