Local students, professionals take part in Global Game Jam

By Lauren E. Toney / For the Sun-News
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LAS CRUCES - Students and professional programmers, artists, and graphic designers will continue to race against the clock to create original video games today as the end of a worldwide, 48-hour marathon game-developing challenge draws near.

New Mexico State University's Learning Game Lab and the Digital Graphics Program at Do-a Ana Community College hosted the weekend-long game-developing marathon as part of this year's Global Game Jam, where game developers from almost 40 countries will participate.

This is the first year NMSU has hosted the event, which began last year with more than 1,600 participants from 23 countries.

"Our goal is to bring people together for professional development," said program coordinator Barbara Chamberlin.

Teams in Las Cruces will create three video games that are playable for five to 10 minutes, said Jeanne Gleason, director of Media Productions at NMSU.

Teams must also incorporate this year's theme of deception, which was announced Friday afternoon at the event's kickoff, into each game, and "give their ideas life within 48 hours," she said.

"It's not really a competition, as there are no winners and no prizes," Gleason said. "It's more of a challenge, and these people are here for the thrill of the creative process."

In keeping with the theme of deception, one of the games being created, called "Vile Haberdashery," pits siblings of a Victorian family against one another to be the last one standing to claim a large inheritance, explained John "C.C." Chamberlin, lead programmer of Media Productions at NMSU.

"The game is designed for the iPhone for four players," he said. "It's a mind game and a power game."

Several participants, including Hannah McGill, 23, of Las Cruces, created the devious siblings and other characters, including a maid and a butler, in "Vile Haberdashery" on Saturday.

After developing the character on her sketch pad, McGill, who studied graphic design at Oklahoma State University, photographed her drawing and uploaded it onto her computer where she used a graphic tablet to bring the character to life.

"Art and technology go hand in hand here," she said.

A first-time participant in the Global Game Jam, McGill said, "It's been a lot of fun."

Jason LaDere, 38, who owns animation, music, software and multimedia studio Dooglamoo in Las Cruces, worked on programming a game called "Bird."

"Players fly their bird around and talk to other birds along the way with the goal of reaching a destination," he explained.

"Because I'm a new business owner, I wanted to participate in (Global Game Jam) to network with other game developers," he said. "It'll help to have these relationships in the future when I look to hire new employees."

For more photos of local students and professionals preparing for Global Game Jam, visit our online photo gallery.
Participants will present their games at 3 p.m. today in the Gerald Thomas Auditorium. The game presentation is open to the public.

Lauren E. Toney can be reached at ltoney@lcsun-news.com; (575) 541-5447.