

Technology Camp Offers Kids Creative Conduit

By Jennifer Wake

During summer, it is not uncommon to see children of all ages blissfully spending hours playing video games or controlling robotic toys, but how does it all work?

Thirteen Lamorinda kids, ranging in age from 7 to 15, enrolled in iD Tech Camp at Saint Mary's College last week to find out. The weekly camps offered at local colleges and universities teach campers how to create video games, build robots, and develop Web sites.

For 11-year-old Nick Barendregt, from Lafayette, the robotics camp was a far cry from his previous Lego work. "I've always been interested in robots," he said, "but this is hard-core robotics, and a more hands on real-life experience."

Barendregt and six other campers have been building two robots: one being encoded using Easy C programming language, the other using the VEX Robotics Design System. "I've started to get into more robotics languages and coding, and will be able to use it outside the camp," Barendregt said.

Other campers participated in Video Game Creation Xtreme, where they used Clickteam Multimedia Fusion 2 Developer software to develop their own video game animation. It was the third time 12-year-old Amanda Griggs from Moraga has attended the camp, and her first time taking Video Game Creation Xtreme – the more advanced course.

"We're working on making our characters move when you move, so they jump and fly," said Griggs, who developed a game where her creatures collect orbs and bring them back to a specific location. "The hardest part is making each level harder, and to make it go to the next level. I've learned

it's really hard to make the complicated video games you buy in stores."

First-time camper, 8-year-old Carter Wirtz of Orinda, built a game called Animal Wars, where animals attack each other. He said the hardest thing was "making the guy move, and stuff and make the enemies bounce around."

"I have kangaroos as some of the enemy and they bounce," he said. His game also includes a scorpion that shoots venom and dragons that shoot fire balls.

Lead instructor Sean Mauney (called "Professor" at camp, who taught the younger campers Adventures in Game Design) expected the class to be a little harder to teach. Mauney, who is a full-time 3-D Animation student at the Academy of Art, was surprised how bright the campers were and how easily they picked things up.

On the final day of the camp, parents get to see their children's work on display. "At the end there's a presentation: every computer shows the project name and they can view the projects," Griggs said. "And then we have a sponge fight."

The final camp at Saint Mary's ends next week. For more information about iD Tech Camp, you can visit www.inter-naldrive.com or call 1-888-709-TECH (8342).



Adventures in Game Design students - (left to right) James Rokas, Conner Morgan, Sean Mauney, Peter Eisenlohr, Carter Wirtz, and Alex Meyers take a crack at video game design and have fun in the process.



Video Game Creation Xtreme students - (left to right) Stefan El baze and Amanda Griggs click on icons to build their video games for Video Game Creation Xtreme.

Photos by Jennifer Wake

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