



For Immediate Release

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Talented P.E.I. student designs winning video game



Many teenagers spend a lot of hours in front of a computer playing video games, but David MacIntosh not only plays the games, he designs them. His talent was recognized Saturday when his Snakes and Ladders and Oil game won him accolades from other designers. MacIntosh is a Grade 11 student at Charlottetown Rural and has been interested in video games for several years.

"I was playing video games, but eventually I decided I would really like to make them and then I saw an ad for a course in video games and have been making them ever since," he said in an interview at UPEI after he received his prizes. Among the prizes is an eight-week paid summer internship at Other Ocean Interactive/Scuplin QA in Charlottetown.

The contest was sponsored by UPEI's video game programming specialization in an effort to raise the profile of computer science as a career, said David LeBlanc, assistant professor/co-ordinator of Usability and Network Testing Lab at UPEI's computer science and information technology department.

Holland College also has a video game art program that was involved in the contest.



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LeBlanc said the province has been supporting the video game industry for a number of years and part of that support are the programs at UPEI and Holland College. This contest was part of a combined effort to build support for the industry. It was open to junior high and high school students.

"As part of Computer Science Education Week, we wanted to put on some sort of event to raise the profile of computer science as a career and we thought the best way to reach out to the high schools was to have a video game competition," he said.

"We are lucky here on the Island that there are a number of school students who have been through the Game Force Program that teaches video game design in the junior high schools." That program is a provincial government initiative where a designer goes into junior high schools and, as an after-school program for a week, teaches basic game design, LeBlanc explained. The program gives students an introduction to video game design and, at the end of that week, they are able to build a simple game. MacIntosh won all three categories - best overall game, best game design and best graphic design.

"His game was extremely impressive," said Leblanc. "We had industry people doing the judging and they played his game beyond what they had to just to judge it ... they actually sat there and played it for 20 minutes because they thought it was fun." His game is based on Snakes and Ladders, MacIntosh said.

"For the first day or so, I was just trying to get a good solid idea of what I was going to make and once I had that, I spent two or three days just trying to get the basics working and after that I spent the rest of the time just making more levels and content and stuff." In seven days, he had his winning game finished.

He said to be a game designer one has to be good at math and science "but the biggest thing is that you just have to be dedicated and passionate about what you are doing." Other winners were second place Jack Baldwin of Birchwood Intermediate School who won best overall game and best game design, and Monica Furness, Montague Regional High School, who won best graphic design. Third place went to Daniel Brown of Three Oaks Senior High School who won best overall game.