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CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- From the classics, like Pac Man and Donkey Kong, to current favorites like Minecraft and Animal Crossing, video games have been capturing the attention of the world for decades. Inspired by this love for high-tech play, a group of Cedarville University students just made their own addition to the gaming legacy.

During the last weekend in January, 17 Cedarville students worked together to complete the Global Game Jam annual game-creation challenge. The challenge tasks students with creating an original high-tech video game in 48 hours, and Cedarville's team collaborated to make five games within the allotted time. **The new games include Game Stonks, Closing Soon, Glipglop In Space, Janitorial Justice, and Rotatris.**

This year's challenge had 20,000 participants from more than 100 countries, with a final game count totaling nearly 6,000. Global Game Jam selects a theme for the games, and this year, they chose "Lost and Found."

"The guidelines are pretty free," Dr. George Landon, professor of computer science, said. "Students can use pre-existing tools, but everything they submit is new content. They begin with concept and design conversations and then divide up the work of programming, creating assets, scoring and writing."

Landon joined the faculty at Cedarville in 2019, and with him, brought eight years of experience with Global Game Jam. When he shared details about the challenge with students, many expressed interest, and those who were already acquainted with it were able to encourage and lead those who didn't know as much.

"I served as the site manager for this year's challenge," Landon added. "Global Game Jam has nearly 600 sites around the world, and each one has to be officiated by someone who's in touch with the organizers. I'm essentially there to ensure that participants know what's going on."

All of the student participants were self-nominated, and of the 17 involved, computer science, music composition and innovative and industrial design majors were represented. They completed their five games from start to finish independent of faculty assistance.

Given pandemic protocols, the collaboration process for the 2021 challenge took a more remote approach. Cedarville's students communicated primarily through Discord, a messaging platform frequently used by gamers. Even so, students overcame whatever difficulties arose from restrictions.

"I love this challenge because it tested the students' ability to start and finish a project," Landon shared. "Starting a project is easy, but finishing it is very difficult. Global Game Jam really

emphasizes this by taking a noncompetitive approach. They essentially say, 'If you made a game, you've won because it's with you forever!'"

Students retain ownership of their games after the competition, and they are free to publish them publicly or post them for sale. Cedarville's students published their games for public play, and they are accessible at https://globalgamejam.org/2021/jam-sites/cedarville-university/games. In addition, the games students develop can be added to professional portfolios.

Landon plans to continue managing and encouraging the challenge in the future, and he is excited about the possibility of greater involvement from Cedarville's students.

"My hope is that more students would learn about this opportunity and participate in it," he said. "Most students have played video games at some point, so having the ability to make their own game leads to some really interesting possibilities."

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,550 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is one of the largest private universities in Ohio, recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, including the Bachelor of Science in computer science program, strong graduation, and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and high student engagement ranking. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.

Written by Heidie Raine