

Campo grad sees extended uses for computer gaming

By Sora O'Doherty



2015 Campolindo graduate Sam Lee Photos provided

Moraga native Sam Lee is interested in video games because, as he explains, for the longest time games were just a diversion, but now they are something more. He is using a scholarship awarded by the Entertainment Software Association Foundation to attend UC Davis where he is a third-year computer science and engineering major.

Lee was one of 30 students representing women and minorities granted \$90,000 in scholarships for degrees in video game arts by the ESA. The scholarships for the 2016-17 academic year were awarded to high school seniors and undergraduate students, who each earn \$3,000 to study subjects such as computer programming, video game design, animation, and digital graphic art at a four-year college or university. Although he hasn't had any games published, he is the president of the Games Development and Arts Club at Davis.

Lee sees potential for using games as learning tools and for therapy. Beginning last June, Lee had a summer internship at Cognivive, a Davis-based digital neurotherapeutics startup that, according to its website, creates "evidence-based treatments in virtual and augmented reality video game form to reduce specific cognitive impairments that are experienced by the healthy aging, many stroke and brain injury patients and individuals with one of several neurogenetic disorders." Lee helped make the games that they used as therapy with a game engine called Unity and learned how performing an activity in a game, like swatting a fly, helped people focus and drew their attention.

Lee says, "It is hard to explain what I think games can do, it's not what most people think." He sees games as allowing people to connect and bond over experiences, as ways to help people, even with therapy. Games are breaking out of the stigma that they are something for slackers, he says. In his opinion, "as much harm as games can do, I also believe that they can do even more good."



Screen shot of one of Lee's video games

A 2015 graduate of Campolindo High School, Lee developed his interest in games in the summer of his sophomore year when he attended the Cosmos program at UC Santa Cruz, which has a game design major. Lee, who had no coding until he took AP computer science as a junior, learned that Games is actually a field of study.

Making education into games makes learning fun for people of all ages and genders, he says.

Lee acknowledges that concerns about the addictive quality of video games are valid, pointing to the fact that developers recognize that they can nab children at a young age. However, he believes that the principles behind gamification can be used for good.

As president of the Games Development and Art Club, Lee organizes weekly workshops for other Davis students to learn about the different aspects of game development from programming to art. He also goes out to underserved elementary and middle schools, including a bilingual school, and teaches students basic computer science through the CS4K program, Computer Science for Kids.

Lee is still deciding whether or not to go to on graduate school, possibly for a master's in computer science or game development.

Right now he is concentrating on his studies and striving to make the game club as high quality as possible. But all work and no play wouldn't be good, so Lee also belongs to a dance club called Popping, where he enjoys a robotic style of dance similar to the performers on Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco.

Saint Mary's College Dance Company Presents 'Counterparts,' Nov. 16-18

Submitted by Leslie Montano



Choreographer, Shaunna Vella.

"Counterparts," choreographed, performed, and produced by the senior class of SMC students, is a statement on how each individual choreographer's expression becomes a part of the larger, diverse and intricate whole that is the Saint Mary's College Dance Company.

Emerging choreographers from the senior class – Kionna Costello, Julia Fajardo, Kelsey Foraker, Lea McGhee, Elizabeth Panella, Shoopie Panholzer, and MacKenzie Shine – will showcase their unique styles and demonstrate the technical and artistic skills of the Saint Mary's dance program. The concert will also feature new choreography by other undergraduate and graduate students of dance: a tap piece by Micah Sallid, a hip-hop solo by Michael Montinola, and a duet by two graduate students Lacin Keles and

Andrea Pardi. All pieces in "Counterparts" share the common theme of exploring human nature and its underlying opposites, and how that impacts the greater community.

A new work is also being commissioned by guest artist KJ Dahlaw, a current graduate student in the SMC MFA in Dance program, who has taught at University of Nevada Reno, Illinois Wesleyan University, Sierra Arts Foundation, and more. Dahlaw's work explores the queer and living body, with this specific piece focusing on an exploration of the senses and the sensing body.

"As the concert director, I have the great honor to be supporting these young and talented emerging artists as they present new work to the greater public. 'Counterparts' is a spectacular dance show that demonstrates the phenomenal artistry

and technical abilities of the Saint Mary's College Dancers Company, and illuminates themes that matter to young artist today such as human nature, community, oppositional forces, oppression, self-reflection and self-determination," says Shaunna Vella, artistic director, LEAP director, and adjunct faculty member.

The seniors are incredibly excited to share their work for the first time and are looking forward to this step into the professional world of dance and a huge step toward graduation. Counterparts will take place at Lefevre Theatre at Saint Mary's College at 8 p.m. Nov. 16, 17, and 18, with an additional matinee at 3 p.m. Nov. 18. Tickets are free for SMC students and \$5 general admission.

Photo Jen Phillips

Find unique pieces by local artists at Orinda's Artisan Faire

Submitted by Lynda Chapman



Glass designs by Cynthia Whitchurch

Photos provided

An exciting variety of work offered by local artists makes this year's 11th annual Artisan Faire a must see, with ceramics, glass, jewelry, paintings, fashion, photography, fiber art, cosmetics and culinary products displayed by some returning favorite artists and new artists, whose work will capture your imagination.

Talk with the artists and learn more about their inspiration and their work while enjoying complimentary wine tasting and samples of culinary products from 4 to 7:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 10 at the Orinda Country Club, 315 Camino Sobrante.

One of the much-loved returning artists is Joan Ragno of Upmarket Design. Her fiber art jackets and coats are so unique that each is a beautiful canvas, designed to be worn and admired. Ragno loves to combine colors and fabric in original ways, and each year brings new designs to the Faire.

Another perennial favorite is Orinda's Gerry Wallace, an accomplished artist whose imaginative and whimsical painted ceramic pieces are true collectors items to brighten to any home.

Cynthia Whitchurch's glass designs are characterized by unique combinations of color and design. "Each piece has its own texture, character and visual qualities," said Whitchurch, whose wide variety of original creations include stunning

decorative bowls and plates, as well as smaller items such as coasters, wine stoppers and nightlights.

The Faire will also highlight charitable organizations including the Rescue One Foundation, which supports the vital emergency services of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District. Also, the sale of children's books written by former Golden State Warrior, Adonal Foyle, will benefit his Kerosene Lamp Foundation, which empowers youth to become healthy and well-educated leaders. A group from Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church will bring their handmade necklaces to benefit needy schools in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

For more information, call (925) 254-6698.



A Joan Ragno jacket

Celebrations

SMC's Tim Farley receives prestigious state relations award



The Council for Advancement and Support of Education Oct. 17 announced the recipients of its 2017 Service Awards in State Government Relations. SMC's Director of Community and Government Relations Tim Farley is being honored for his advocacy work and leadership in elevating Saint Mary's College's profile among California legislators and staff. Prior to his work at SMC, Farley served in elected office and on the

staff for California state legislators and has successfully leveraged these relationships to advocate for issues important to his institution. According to Christopher Sindt, vice provost for academic affairs at Saint Mary's, Farley has "built an impressive program of community outreach and partnerships" and that the institution's government and community relations program is considered "one of the most effective in the state of California and has become a model for other colleges." And one community leader recently commended Farley's work, saying "Tim Farley's extraordinary gifts as a communicator and problem solver make him such an asset to our region. His passion and dedication to higher education are unrivaled."

The honorees will be recognized at an awards luncheon Dec. 7 at the 2017 Higher Education Government Relations Conference in San Diego, California.