

# AFK

Away  
From  
The  
Keyboard:

NSU Students  
Share A  
Slice of  
Gaming Life





Letter  
from the

# EDITORS

On the very first day of our COMM 4320 class, we started talking about our hobbies as a group, when we realized that we all play video games. Over the semester, we created the insides of this neon magazine to reveal stories of four NSU students as they explore gaming "Away From the Keyboard."-

*Anna & Katy*



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1- I'm Not a Competitive Gamer: Should I Be?  
by Zach Carroll

4- Should I Stay or Should I Go? by Waylon  
Washington

6- Geeks of Kin by Anna Duplantis

10- Love & Esports by Katy Rigol

13- Let the Games Begin by Waylon  
Washington

16- When I Grow Up I Want to Be a Streamer by  
Anna Duplantis

20- Majoring in Gaming by Zach Carrol

22- Breaking the Gaming Glass Ceiling by  
Katy Rigol

# I'm not a Competitive Gamer: Should I Be?

BY ZACH CARROLL

I am being yelled at by some 13-year-old kid. "SHOOT!! SHOOT!! BUILD!!! WHY ARE YOU JUST STANDING IN THE OPEN?!!" Learning how to play games can be very difficult especially when you don't know how to say the name. LIKE, what is a Fortnite? On top of having no clue how to move in the game, this little kid is telling you for 45 minutes you suck at the game. Although one of the greatest feelings in the world is winning your first match after starting from literal scratch, especially beating my little brother. Life seems complete and all the hard work pays off.



Video games have taken over the life of children and adults all across the globe. Gamers make more money in a day than someone with a lifelong career. Personally, I have never understood the hype of video games and why people enjoy playing them. My Communications class challenged me to branch out and see if I'm good at more than just sports games, but they forgot to mention how hard it was going to actually be. Hence, the help of my wonderful brother.

Sports games like Madden and MLB The Show were the only games I even attempted to play. I never tried to play any other type of game. They

looked very hard and they didn't seem to be very interesting, but in order for me to complete the request made from my classmates I had to find games that I could play.

After searching online and bugging every random stranger on the street I finally came to a conclusion on what games I needed to play: Fortnite, Call of Duty, and Saints Row. A lot of the people I talked to just shouted out a bunch of random games for me to play but a few of them had comments on why they play those games and what they get from them.

I remember one day I was sitting in the Cafe with my friends Landon and Justus. I was already scared to ask people what games I should play. I assumed a lot of them wouldn't even answer my question. I got a lot of positive feedback and it made me start to feel like this journey wouldn't be for nothing, even from an old buddy of mine Evan Murphy. In fact, he was the one who suggested I play Fortnite.

Now that I had the games I was going to play, I had to learn how to play them. but trust me on this--I couldn't teach myself. I honestly didn't think I did bad the first time I played Fortnite. My little brother would disagree.

The dynamic of this game is crazy and watching people play this professionally on YouTube made me want to learn every aspect of it so that I'd be good at it too. Streamers like Ninja and Tim the Tatman were who really made me want to play the game.

From building to shooting and finding loot this game is crazy and fast paced just because it is scattered across the map and you never know what



you are going to find. But the path was not easy at all and it definitely took time and work. It took me 2-3 hours just to get the hang of what I was doing. I would stay up all hours of the night and watch YouTubers, along with the help of TikTok. The real struggle was managing so many things at once, and basically you have to be perfect and craft every aspect of the game for it to be a good time.



In the beginning I wanted to just quit and say 'this wasn't worth it' because the game did not seem fun. But, I had to complete the task I had at hand and I wanted to give it my best shot. Before I knew it, I won my first real match.

Sweat fell down my face, my tongue was dry to the touch, all noise and commotion was blocked out. I checked my phone and I had been trying to find a match for 2 hours. 2 HOURS!!!! My head and eyes hurt with pain and all I wanted to do was quit. It was the feeling of winning my first match that made all the hard work pay off. But, the addiction was only beginning.

Believe it or not, my fraternity brothers were just like me and I made them fall in love with the game too. Now, I see why 99% of the people I asked for games to play told me Fortnite.

We played almost every night while eating whatever frozen food we could find, staying up knowing that we had class in the morning.

The second game I needed to try was Call of Duty. But honestly this game was hard and very complicated. I had no idea what was going on and honestly I think I had watched every YouTube video possible and I was still dying every time.

On top of learning how to play the actual game, there were about 20 different styles and modes I could use and every single one of those took its own time getting used to. In order for me to perfect this game I needed to get some serious help from a professional. Who else to turn to? My little brother Kody, of course.

We basically started from scratch and in each phase I had to learn more and more. The hardest part of this all had to be the multitasking it took to play Call of Duty, and understanding the concept of each mode I played. Call of Duty is not for the impatient or the weak minded because the amount of frustration I faced in just one week is more than some people get in their lifetime.

Actually, my first time playing the mode "Team Deathmatch," was very frustrating because along with having to win my team a round I had to also focus on being the best player and having the most kills. Trying to manage all three was just mind boggling. It was so demanding that I had to take my headset off.

I will be honest this game got to be one of my top 3 games to play. You have to play hard to win but once you learn everything the game just comes naturally. Plus, the game offers more ways to play than the



once you learn the concept. I was just confused by the story and it didn't help that every time I accidentally shot someone,

people in the game tried killing me until I died. I would recommend it with people who have a bit of imagination.

So, now here I am at the end of my journey, at a loss for words. I went from only playing sports games to now learning how to play games out of my comfort zone. I can respect someone who does this for a living, or people who do this for fun and as a hobby. My views have been completely flipped upside down and I honestly think I will play the games more than I do my regulars like MLB or Madden.

I have decided to buy more games to play and learn, like "Uncharted and Fallout 3 and 4. There is a lot more to video games than sports. They're more than just something to do when you're bored, just like my brother has told me. Who would have thought Kody was right this whole time? Turns out that being yelled at by a 13 year old really wasn't that bad after all.

other 2 games. Matter of fact, I have played Call of Duty every day since I made the purchase.

My brother was very harsh to me in the beginning of all this, mostly because he had waited his entire life to teach me how to play the exact games I called him stupid for playing. But once I learned how to play, he knew we were equal and it made our time playing together fun.

The last game on my journey of branching out was Saints Row 3. I only needed to call for help one more time, from only one kid--Kody. Honestly, this game was mostly campaigns or what people call story modes. Most of these had a storyline that I had to follow in order to complete the game. You travel and try to fight other games and take over the map which didn't seem like a whole lot to me. It was kinda boring, if you ask me!

It was probably the easiest game out of the three to learn how to play. Because I had never played it before, I found myself lost on what I was actually doing, trying to find a purpose for the game. The one thing I loved was how diverse and how easy it was to branch out. You can use different guns and people to complete the missions. Also, missions aren't as easy as you think so you get addicted to trying to beat them.

From the modes, side quests, and weapons, Saints Row is an all around good game once you learn how to play. I basically just ran around and figured it out on my own. The controls were very simple and there were easy ways to beat my way through a mission. The game seems to seem go on repeat





# Should I Stay or Should I Go?

BY WAYLON  
WASHINGTON

Increasing numbers of young video gamers view competitive video gaming and streaming as a potential lucrative career opportunity, rather than just a recreational activity. I, too, have thought about that.

Like many teenagers, I started spending my free time playing computer games and making videos. Today, it's no longer unheard of for people to make good money creating content online. Why shouldn't I be among them? I'll tell you why. I'm in college. I want to be the first of my brothers to graduate. But the pull is still there. Every day, the colorful LED lights glow around my room as I power up my gaming PC to start a stream. I never know who will watch, maybe one, ten, or 100 viewers, but the ambition to be the next, Ninja, Pokimane, and Kai Cenet keep me streaming. So, the question becomes...should I stay or should I go? Chadrick Keith from Coushatta is a former college student who left to pursue his dreams.



# GO

..VS..

# STAY

**Q: How important is gaming to you and how does it impact your life?**

**Chadrick:** *I've been gaming every since I was little, from playing with my cousins at a young age and having so much fun playing growing up, I knew I would enjoy it while my life progressed.*

**Q: Was the choice of dropping out of college hard and how does becoming a streamer that games play a part in your decision?**

**Chadrick:** *Well since I've dropped of college I've started my own wing business called Geaux Geaux Wings, and I find myself questioning if I should go back to college to major in business, but I have all the tools I need to to become a streamer, and with being a gamer becoming more and more of a thing, I put my energy and effort towards that when Im not working.*

**Q: What are some issues you face on jump starting your career in gaming/streaming?**

**Chadrick:** *Finding time to actually focus on it with me having work and getting people to watch my stream to gain a audience.*

**Q: Did you make the right decision?**

**Chadrick :** *Honestly sometimes I think about going back, but I always think we make decisions that's beneficial to us in that moment, and when I left college, I was doing what was best for me.*

**Q: With you starting a gaming career at an early age what made you further your education and not leave college?**

**Waylon:** *I stayed in college because of football, just like I had a dream to be a successful gamer, I had a dream to be an NFL player also.*

**Q:Do you ever think about dropping out?**

**Waylon :** *Yeah , I think everyone who has multiple interests and talents thinks about dropping out of college, especially when I see people that inspire me who went to college and dropped out. That makes me question myself every day.*

**Q:Will the decision of you staying in college effect the potential of you becoming a full-time gamer in a positive or negative way?**

**Waylon :** *It depends on how you look at it. Dropping out can put you ahead of others who want to become professional gamers, because you can just focus on that. You would not be dealing with school and homework other obligations and wondering "should stay or leave?"*



# S

# Geeks of Win

BY: ANNA DUPLANTIS

“Throwin’ a grenade!” My Father yells. “Crouch over here or you’re gonna eat it!” My brother Kyan yelled back. Despite being less than 10 feet apart and separated by thin walls, my family tends to scream regardless of how clear quality a microphone can be. It’s always the same: “shoot, shoot, shoot!” or “No, no, no!” or if you’re unlucky, a string of all curse words possible to say in a three-second interval. “Can someone get the door?!” I heard my mother scream into the abyss of gamer catastrophe.

Being in my family’s house when you don’t have headphones on can sound like you’re in a zoo mixed with a demolition derby. You can’t begin to hear your own thoughts when it’s drowned out by digital gunfire, for example how the doorbell had been ringing. I threw off my headphones and yelled “I’ll get it!” to my family, but I doubt anyone could hear me except my youngest brother Evan whom I’d been on a call, playing Minecraft with. “Wait don’t leave your player out in the open!” he shrieked.

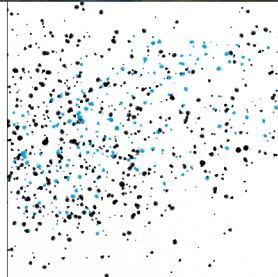
Every person in my immediate family is a bunch of geeks. Evan and I are PC Gamers. My older little brother, Kyan, plays the oculus (VR) and he plays on Xbox live with my Dad. My mom has sworn off her gaming days for the most part, but believe me, the fire is still there, or else she wouldn’t be making an

effort to learn the lore of Apex Legends with my dad. Don’t get me started on how I was almost named ‘Katana’ like The Mortal Kombat character, I feel robbed of not having that name.

With the continuous screams of my house, the neighbors know by now that this is the house that sounds like a warzone action movie with Tom Cruise as the lead actor. To those that don’t, it can be jarring. Especially when you don’t expect your pizza delivery to be answered by a twenty-one-year-old woman in a full Princess Peach cosplay.

The big geek described? That would be me, the only person that took off their headphones to listen for the doorbell when expecting the fourth pizza delivery of the week. What I wouldn’t do to relive the day my family and I successfully made a teenage delivery boy feel like he needed early retirement. That’s just how intense my family is though; you need earplugs and a hefty screaming voice to save your sanity. Many people wish for their families to be as ‘cool’ as mine but to be honest, it has its pros and cons.

After I threw the cash my mom left out for the delivery boy, I frantically ran to the kitchen to put down the three boxes. Delightful smells of pepperoni and cheese almost overpower my free will, but sadly to my stomach, I have a game of Minecraft



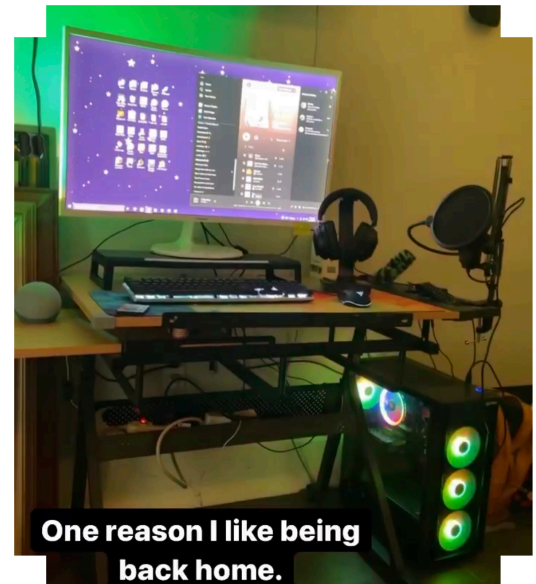
to get back to. The excruciating heat is still present on my hands as I try my best to rush back to my room. Before I could get back I heard a louder than usual and noticeably pubescent screech of a fourteen-year-old boy, “Anna! There’s a creeper right next to you!” Haphazardly, I have a failed attempt at putting my headphones on my head, cords covering my face and only one ear barely covered. Although it was already too late; my character, Steve, had been blown up by a creeper.

As soon as I was able to get my mic adjusted and headset on more than just one ear, I yell back to my youngest brother, “Explain why you didn’t have time to save me?” I could hear him laughing as he gave his sheepish reply “... I saw a cool dog...and I wanted to tame it.” I almost got a frustrated rebuttal out but was met with an equal amount of sass from him.

“Please explain why you went AFK?” His attitude was so thick, I could essentially hear his smug grin. “Unlike anyone else in this house, I actually listen for when



the doorbell rings.” Putting two and two together he immediately knows what’s here. It’s only every other day we get pizza, almost three times a week, and leftovers to spare, why would he be surprised much less still enthused? “We got pizza?!” he yelled so loud I had to take my headphones back off before my ears started to bleed. “Yes Evan, when do we ever not?” That’s the unfortunate part of having a family with the appetite of teenagers, it gets old having junk food all the time.



After reloading my, now-dead character, I went back to mining solo. This is just more my style; being able to play how I want like when I was a kid. Back then, Minecraft was just a small plot of land with nothing fun to do except blow up your surroundings. What more could a destructive eight-year-old ask for? Not much different than other games I played as a kid, but at the same time Minecraft was very tame compared to what I played for the years following 2009.

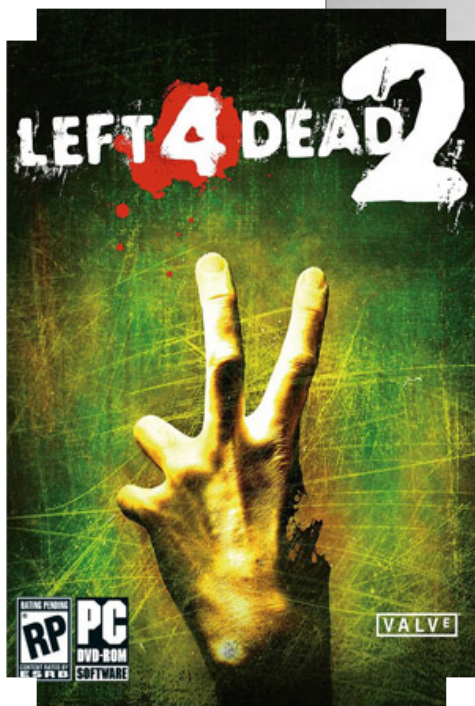
Ten years ago, when I was eleven, I didn’t have many friends. I had just moved from Louisiana to Alabama and I didn’t know



how to not be the tu-tu-wearing, neon leggings-having, Pokémon-obsessed nerd that I was. With that Disney channel outfit combo, it made middle school a lot harder. So how did I cope with almost no friends and too much free time? I played a lot of video games, but not cutesy 'baby games'

like Minecraft or Webkinz. I played Left For Dead 2, a zombie co-op survival game where you'd play as one of four survivors set in New Orleans, Louisiana. It was very comforting that my new favorite game was also something that reminded me of home, after moving. This was also one of my first times making online-friends. Unfortunately, it was also my first of many unsupervised moments talking to strangers on the internet.

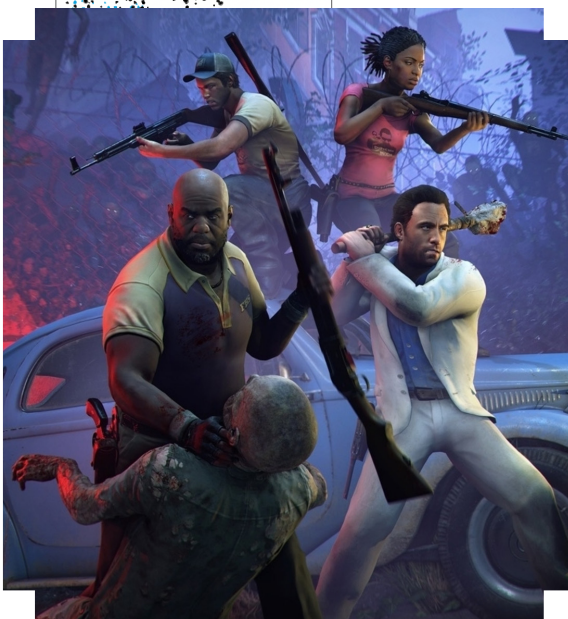
Looking back, I'm surprised I wasn't kidnapped. I would gladly hop on Xbox Live and turn my mic on to talk to my teammates. Whenever a male-dominated space is faced with the case of a young girl online talking to them they take one of three routes: 1."Are you a girl?" (surprised), 2."Are you a girl?" (predatory), and 3. "Go make me a sandwich." All of this would just make me try and fail to deepen my voice

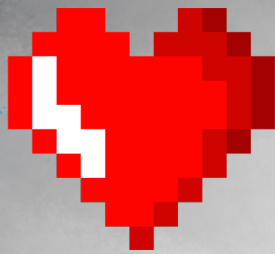
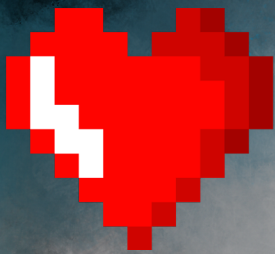


and say "...No..." when I had the voice of a tea kettle that inhaled helium. I think all of these crappy things had to happen as a learning experience considering that I've gotten way 'better' at comebacks, I say better but this mostly involved me saying "Your mom" to any harsh or creepy response. Learning to navigate and stay safe online was not an easy trick. It's not really something our parents could teach us considering they were just as lost. My parents are still trying to teach us about proper safety with being online, but hey Mom and Dad, I am a certified Xbox zombie killer, I know my way. Our house rules, however, are a different story.

After mining for a while, I thought I finally found some diamonds, but sadly it was the cursed lapis lazuli, a grey stone with very similar blue spots to diamonds. As I let my disappointment fester, Evan ran back into my room holding a hot slice of pizza. "Ah! Ah! Ah! This is still hot!"

he said, in between failed bites of molten pizza, breathing onto the slice with every bite trying to cool it down and not burn his mouth in the same breath. "Why don't you have a plate?" I said to him. Another failed bite he said "Ah! There weren't any clean plates." "Ugh," I groan. "You couldn't wash just one to eat?" "I did them last time, it's Kyan's turn." I groan one more time before shooing him away. It's like my





brothers just don't value their chores, even when it's their downfall. "You did this to yourself, have fun burning your mouth to hell and back." I went back to my game to block out the noise again. Sometimes it is better to just ignore some of these issues and do what you can on your own.

A few more hours of playing passed and I thought I had enough materials and courage to fight The Ender Dragon. Being in a house where everyone is their own special variant of neurodivergent with the added plus of everyone having ADHD, is its own special battle. But dealing with some of these issues is a lot like fighting the Ender Dragon though. The dragon is located in "The End Land." A nifty thing about this area of the game is that you can't place a bed and sleep in The End, to save your game. You have to have full confidence, commitment, and willpower to defeat the dragon, or else, the bed explodes and you die. Yep, they make the beds explode, but to many, this is a great way to defeat the dragon! This thing that was supposed to be so debilitating and harsh ended up being the fastest and most effective way to solve the problem. Much like the mind of people with ADHD, sometimes your fast thinking and wandering minds can lead to some really beneficial advantages when it comes to creativity.

Having a family like this, you learn to not

feel very confident in anything being done in time or on schedule but when it is, it's done pretty well compared to most. Every family member is guilty of immediately logging online or binge-watching movies when we get home from an outing. Yes, the geeks go outside occasionally. We do in fact 'touch grass' sometimes. Who can blame us when we have the best Wi-Fi in

the neighborhood? We've dabbled in board games and card games to interact IRL, but inevitably we are a chronically online family. When we need something done, however, we tend to get frustrated with each other. Ironically, everyone is in the same boat, and no one remembers what the original conflict was by the end of the day. Regardless of how much we can't focus on chores, there's always one thing we never forget and that is to love each other. At the end of the day, it's best to take a rest and enjoy what you have, or else you might explode in turn to defeat The Ender Dragon.



# LOVE & ESPORTS



BY KATY RIGOL

**“My goal is to leave my legacy in gaming and to leave everything my wife and I built so that my kids can have their own,”** -@Dareala318sycho (Patrick), posted on Twitter 2/23/21.

On an autumn night, a couple entered their front room after a hard-fought video game of “Apex Legends,” their favorite game to stream and broadcast live for viewers. They had been streaming on the platform Mixer, which they’d just discovered was going out of business, leaving the two to reevaluate their streaming hobby and consider other platforms.



A square marble table sits to the left of the swirling black “FAMILY” wall ornament above the TV, though this isn’t where Patrick and Relanda Lee play their video games. Here at their home in Natchitoches (area code 318), the couple can often be found playing tabletop games like Monopoly or Uno with their kids. When not covered in cards and game boards, this table is where Patrick indulges in Relanda’s home cooking, which almost always

includes a healthy serving of creamy mashed potatoes.

It was time to expedite their gaming ambitions, skip the reevaluations, and jump right into the world of competitive gaming known as esports. Patrick, still energized by the adrenaline-inducing gunfights of “Apex,” eagerly looked toward the future in which he and Relanda would make a career out of esports, starting a team and building a roster of players and streamers. “It’s gonna be fiya!” he optimistically concluded, using the slang term for “fire” (pronounced “fai ah”).

**“Fiya House Gaming Esports Coming soon!!”** -@Dareala318sycho (Patrick), posted on Twitter 5/4/21.

In esports, there are a variety of roles to fill, from competitive players to streamers and content creators, and the staff behind the scenes. Given her role as Hiring Manager at Pilgrims Pride poultry production in Natchitoches, Relanda is familiar with the process of recruiting. Patrick, who works late shifts at Wendy’s on University Parkway, prides himself on “customer service,” a helpful skillset in an industry largely dependent on effective communication online.

To them, FiyaHouse is yet another close-knit home. “We want our players to not think of this as a team but as a family,” Patrick says of the five streamers they’ve now recruited for games like Warzone and Fortnite.

In addition to plans for roster expansion across more games, Relanda details her vision for a “retro



and new-school” arcade where FiyaHouse can host tournaments. She already has the business license for FIYA HOUSE GAMING ARCADE LLC, a prospective Natchitoches arcade venue built from “the ground-up.” Between work, family, and FiyaHouse, she admits, “It’s a lot, but if you want it, you have to work for it.” One day.



**“Wondering what questions she’s gonna ask? I think I’m freaking out again?”** -@Dareala318sycho (Patrick), posted on Twitter 8/20/22.

I heard about FiyaHouse from a shoutout Tweet listing Louisiana esports organizations, and I decided I wanted to meet the team in-person. I was nervous, too, but the atmosphere of Papa’s Bar & Grill put me at ease. We were all too excited to eat.

An old country song echoes beneath the voices of a handful of patrons; a collection of football helmets lines the shelf to the left of the TV, which displays a compilation of recent sports highlights. With the components of a conventional sporting

ambiance at his back and rustic melodies overhead, Patrick makes a plea for their foray into the innovative world of esports, “Natchitoches just gotta notice us.”

Patrick has lived in this town his whole life, 37 years to be exact. This is where he met Relanda at age 14. “I didn’t go to school that day,” he explains how he carelessly missed the bus. “I went to my sister’s and I saw her and it was love at first sight.” He also admits the two did not speak much prior to his nervous request for a date.

In what could have been the quick end to their story, Relanda would then move to Texas and stay there for the next four years, but fate is patient. She would eventually move back and find herself working on Kesyer Avenue, where she and Patrick would once more cross paths.

Sticking her head out the door of Jackson Hewitt Tax Service north of Keyser’s humming cars and west of the rippling Cane River, she shouted “Patrick! Patriiiiick!” Unaware, Patrick moseyed alongside friends, likely attributing the faint calls to another car or buzzing mosquito. Finally, a friend gestured for him to turn around.

Today, both Patrick and Relanda wear a nostalgic smile that says, “And the rest is history.”

**“Happy anniversary to us. We made it through these years”** -@MrsBoutThat318 (Relanda), posted on Twitter 3/30/22.

“Our kids are gamers, too,” Relanda adds. The couple’s two teenagers, Nataiya and Timothy,



are already looking forward to representing their parents' esports team. "My son and I were having a talk about it yesterday, and he told me he wants to be a content creator under FiyaHouse," she says.

Although the FiyaHouse team is a strong team of two (Patrick and Relanda), the growing organization of now eight total has welcomed more specialists to drive its success behind the scenes, or behind the screens.

**"Welcome our newest member of the family" - @FiyaHouseGG, posted on Twitter 8/3/22.**

To create a look and logo for the growing team, Patrick and Relanda turned to Michael "ApparelMerp" Perdomo for a FiyaHouse design. For social media, he created an achromatic Wraith (a character from the video game Apex Legends) that lunges towards the viewer with glowing white eyes and splashes of red framing her ominous pose. Perdomo's designs are often dark and shrouded in shadow, with purposeful pops of bold color that

give off a sense of dynamic life, like certain bioluminescence.

For the official FiyaHouse jersey, he uses a midnight black base with crisp red lines, the team name across the chest boldly drawn in white. Beneath this is a subtle, somewhat transparent flame sketch that evokes the passionate idiom "fire in the belly." Patrick and Relanda have that motivation to build FiyaHouse to its fullest potential.

**"Okay everyone, to those members of FiyaHouse please make sure your clips are in... Deadline is today!" -@FiyaHouseGG, posted on Twitter 10/1/22.**

"It's not about the moment— it's about the opportunity to take the moment," Patrick believes. At this moment, in the middle of a restaurant filled with relics of traditional sports and patrons entertaining the meals under their noses, FiyaHouse Gaming goes humbly unnoticed, but only for now. "It's about to come," Patrick hints at the breakthrough of this Natchitoches family's esports organization.



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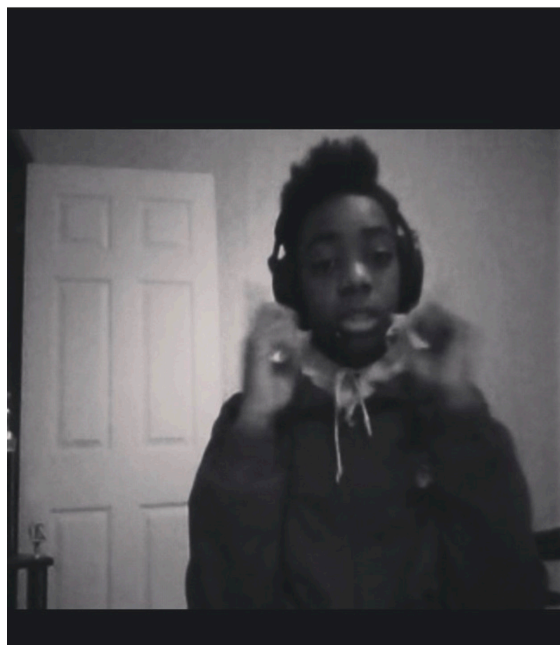


# Let The Games Begin

BY WAYLON WASHINGTON

One night before school in 6th grade, I found myself so invested in my gaming group that I decided that it was time to make a YouTube intro. Everyone else in the house was asleep but me. I snuck my mom's laptop out of the living room, tiptoed up to my room and began looking up how to make a YouTube intro. Minutes into trying to make a gaming intro for myself and my friends, I heard my mom's footsteps getting closer and closer to my room.

 zippsy



5 likes

zippsy Snapping a couple pics why I play the game

June 20, 2014

She opened my door, and said “What are you doing on my laptop, and why are you not asleep?” Being a kid on your mom's laptop in the middle of the night was not a good look for me, and when I told her I was just making a video her face was filled with confusion.

A year later, it was a Friday night, it had been a long day. Homework was finished, chores were done, and it was finally time to play the game. Call of Duty boots up, and the sound of the PlayStation home screen opening rose in the room. I attached my headset around my ears, joined the game chat with friends, and then the questions came: “When will my video introduction be made?” Gaming started as something I loved doing. Then I found out about this whole other side of gaming on YouTube that included creating gaming content to make a profit. While I found myself indulging in this new idea of gaming and creating, my parents did not know anything about it. They did not know that my gaming for fun had transitioned to gaming for my future.

Being a 7th grader in a gaming group felt like a full-time job with no pay, specially when I helped create the group and the YouTube channel called OdysT Gaming. The gaming group was going so well we had a YouTube Channel, at least 20 members, videos uploaded, and had started to gain many subscribers on our channel. At the time we were middle school teenagers running a whole organization, but you wouldn't



know on the outside looking in. The group was organized; we had a roster, a schedule, a detailed document on what our gaming group was about, and I ran the show. We were introduced to the concept of gaming companies being sponsors for our videos. The idea of us growing, and becoming big started to be a goal for all of us, but we weren't prepared for the transition to high school, having more homework, after-school activities, and even jobs. So, we found that the energy we were putting towards the channel eventually decreased day by day. No one was getting online anymore, group chats became dead, and the YouTube channel came to a halt. The clan just wasn't the same anymore. Since I was



the Co-founder and the creator of the OdysT Gaming YouTube channel, I decided to end that group and start up my own by renaming the channel Natural Gaming. As soon as I did that, my old gaming buddies from OdysT took matters into their own hands and changed the name back without me knowing. Why would my friends do this to me?

The next morning before school I was dressed and waiting at the bus stop. It was a little wait until my bus came, so I took out my iPod and went to YouTube. I noticed the YouTube channel I created once for my friends had been taken from me, and I couldn't access it at all. Now I was angry and concerned about who could have done this. I messaged my group of gaming friends and asked them, concluding that a member got access to the channel and took it. Betrayal filled my head. All those late nights editing, creating, and stealing my mom's laptop had been for nothing!

Days and weeks passed. The betrayal that once saddened me had turned into motivation. I created my own YouTube channel. I was so upset about losing the channel before, because I felt like it was the end of something. I came to realize that the OdysT YouTube channel was created from my own creativity and work ethic. Losing that channel wasn't the issue anymore. It was the fear of not being able to have enough content for my new channel. I started to do my own thing.

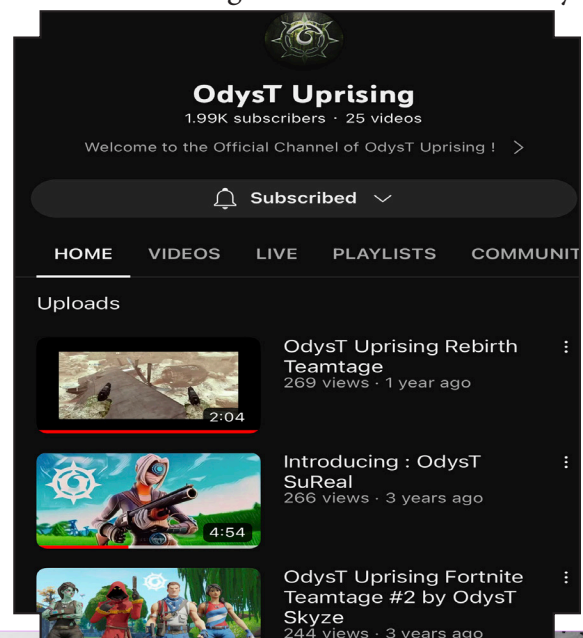


Two more years passed. By ninth grade enough time had passed that I wasn't mad at my old friends anymore because I decided and discovered what I wanted to do in my future career. I am now a 15-year-old teenager. I find myself in front of a laptop, the same laptop I took from my mom. Sounds of the keyboard now crack as keys get jammed while I insert the title of my newest gaming video called "Blessings." My description stated, "Just had to upload something. Please leave a like and subscribe!!!!" What I did not realize was this was the last gaming video I would ever create, because I decided to focus on sports videos. August was also the month I started my sophomore year of high school, and playing football started to become a priority of mine. By the end of August, I recorded a workout video with me and my teammates. Using the skills I gained over the years of making gaming videos, I edited the workout video and uploaded it into my own channel on YouTube. That was 7 years ago.

Back then a lot of the gaming videos that inspired me looked like movies. The elements of cinematography, b roll, text, storytelling and a main character were all there. I did not really know what made a good video back then. I just looked at all the interesting videos that gained a lot of attention and incorporated the same ideas into mine. I now have a business that goes by WaeFilms where I specifically upload videos, that I create for clients like the NSU football team,

local businesses, artists, barbers, non-profit organizations all using film techniques I learned back in 6th grade while holding a gaming controller.

Gaming introduced me to creative skills I never thought I would have or use in my professional life. Now that I am in college, I decided to major in Communication just because my advisor told me that Communication with a focus in media was the closest thing NSU offers to Cinematography. I am shooting and editing videos for sports teams on campus, and even got to be a part of this amazing Documentary class where we made documentaries and had a screening on campus. Never thought stealing my mom's laptop to create a YouTube video would ever get me to where I am today.



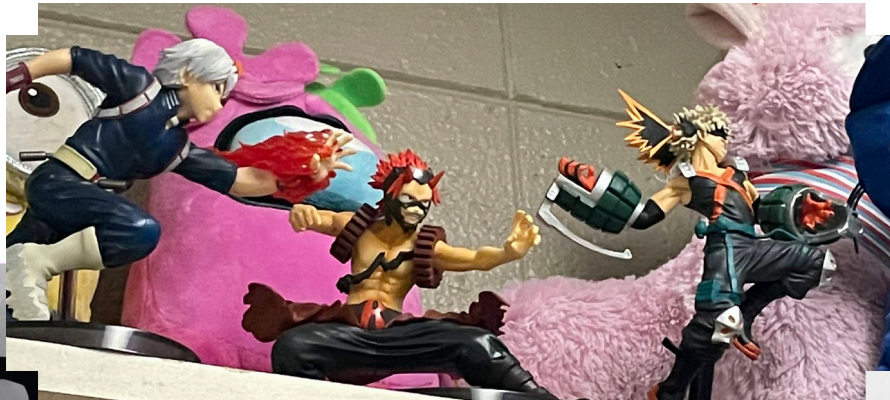
# When I Grow Up, I want To Be A Streamer

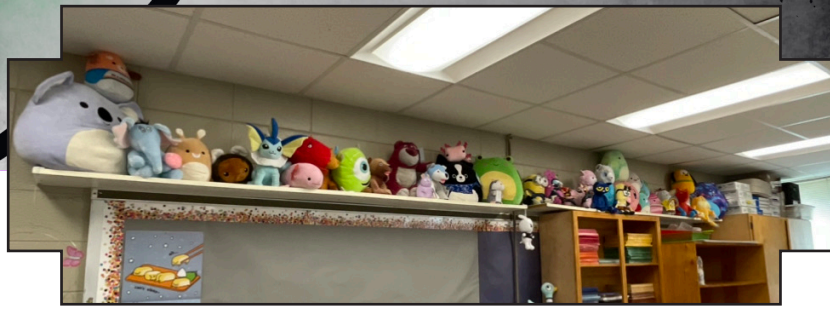
BY: ANNA DUPLANTIS

Eight-year-old Charlie, carried his Minecraft lunchbox as he ran into his Bonne E. Cole Elementary school classroom and exclaimed, "Ms. Jenny! Do you play Minecraft?!" His teacher responded "Yes I do! Do you play video games too?!" Excited, Charlie responded "Ms. Jenny! Do you like Fortnite too?" This exchange only encouraged the other students to share their favorite games. Video games have always been wildly popular but nowadays it feels like a rarity to find a child that doesn't have a favorite YouTuber, streamer, video game, or all three. Will these gaming interests of young students create the desire for realistic gaming careers for this generation of the chronically online?



When many people think of a classroom dedicated to elementary-level art, they may think of paint on the floors, colored construction paper, and Elmer's glue everywhere. "Basic" is not a word used when describing Jenny Duplantis' classroom. Anime action figures, gamer merchandise galore, Minecraft posters, and even a light-up RGB keyboard are on display. You can quickly tell this is a kid's favorite place to go when almost all the graphic backpacks and lunchboxes they carry are covered in video-game references. The best way to make a child feel seen is to relate to them and make them feel unique with their interests. Jenny does not shy away from showing students just how many references she's up to date on. When Ms. Jenny asked, children from grade level pre-k through 6th were





confident in their answers on what they want to be when they grow up. This survey was conducted in her art room, by a means of students raising their hands when a career interested them. When asked if anyone in the room wanted to be a police officer, the reactions of the younger students were seemingly random, raising their hands merely to participate out of fear of being incorrect. None of these young kids were expressive in their answers; unsure and skeptical. When asking grades 4-6, positive answers were extremely low. The older children had little to no interest in a traditional job. The same mixed results occurred

for similar general careers like firefighter, or lawyer. When asked if they want to be a streamer or YouTuber however, the room erupted for

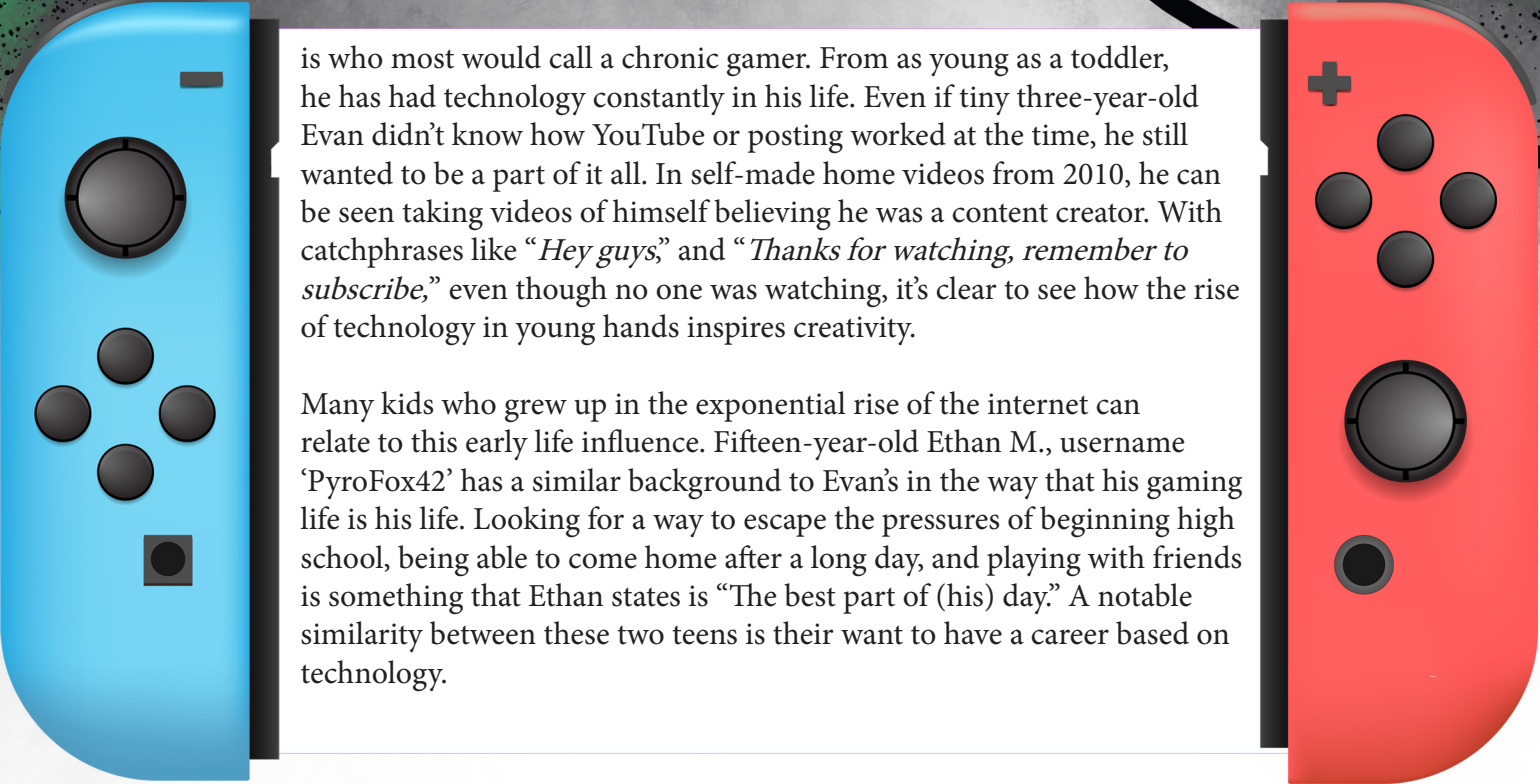


every grade. Almost every child was ecstatic to share who their favorite creators were and why they were 'the best.'

Many kids today are fascinated and even passionate about achieving their dreams of becoming famous. However,

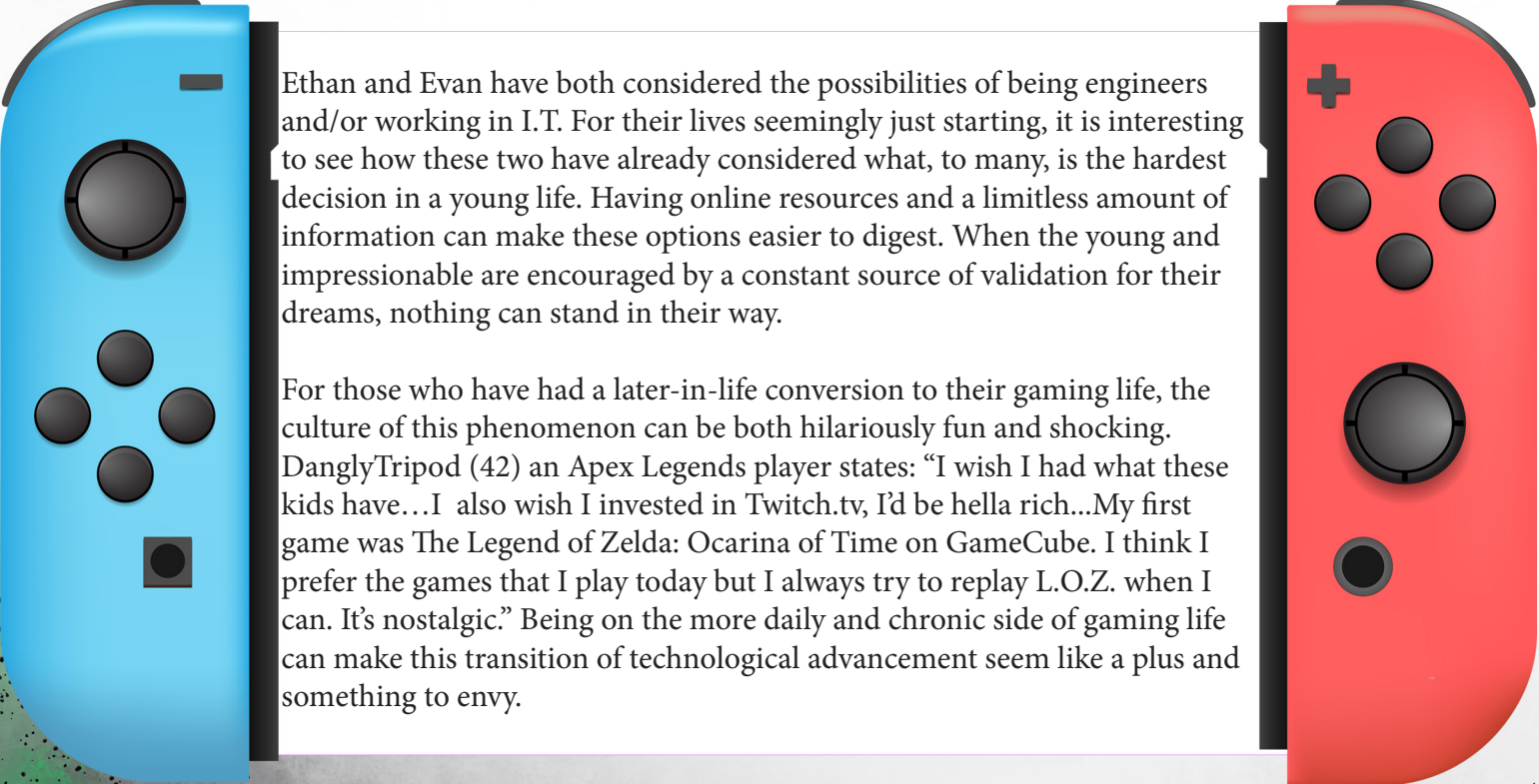
it's not 'movie star'-famous, walking the red carpet, or book famous signing copies for hundreds of fans. The goal is to be a 'c-list celebrity, low brow, internet streaming'-famous. With wanting to start their adult lives repeating the phrase "Hey what's up guys, welcome back to another video-" are we ready for the future they've seemingly already planned?

YouTube video after YouTube video of their favorite gamers never seems to bore the youth of today. Evan Duplantis (14), also known as 'Sparkz2827',



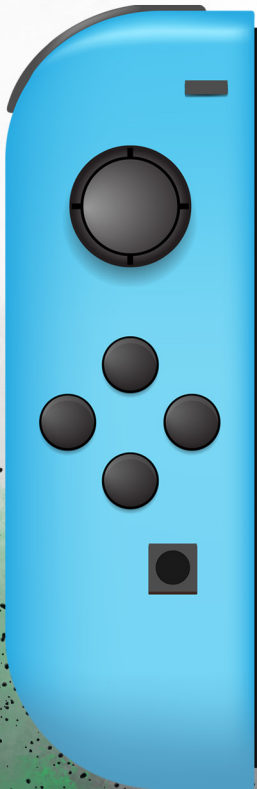
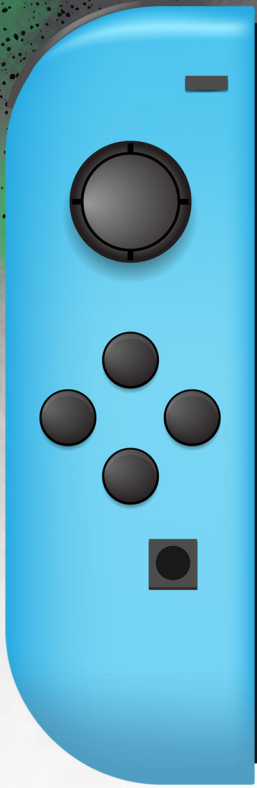
is who most would call a chronic gamer. From as young as a toddler, he has had technology constantly in his life. Even if tiny three-year-old Evan didn't know how YouTube or posting worked at the time, he still wanted to be a part of it all. In self-made home videos from 2010, he can be seen taking videos of himself believing he was a content creator. With catchphrases like "*Hey guys,*" and "*Thanks for watching, remember to subscribe,*" even though no one was watching, it's clear to see how the rise of technology in young hands inspires creativity.

Many kids who grew up in the exponential rise of the internet can relate to this early life influence. Fifteen-year-old Ethan M., username 'PyroFox42' has a similar background to Evan's in the way that his gaming life is his life. Looking for a way to escape the pressures of beginning high school, being able to come home after a long day, and playing with friends is something that Ethan states is "The best part of (his) day." A notable similarity between these two teens is their want to have a career based on technology.



Ethan and Evan have both considered the possibilities of being engineers and/or working in I.T. For their lives seemingly just starting, it is interesting to see how these two have already considered what, to many, is the hardest decision in a young life. Having online resources and a limitless amount of information can make these options easier to digest. When the young and impressionable are encouraged by a constant source of validation for their dreams, nothing can stand in their way.

For those who have had a later-in-life conversion to their gaming life, the culture of this phenomenon can be both hilariously fun and shocking. DanglyTripod (42) an Apex Legends player states: "I wish I had what these kids have...I also wish I invested in Twitch.tv, I'd be hella rich..My first game was The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time on GameCube. I think I prefer the games that I play today but I always try to replay L.O.Z. when I can. It's nostalgic." Being on the more daily and chronic side of gaming life can make this transition of technological advancement seem like a plus and something to envy.



As a teacher and member of Gen X, Jenny Duplantis has witnessed the shift in the way kids think about “What they want to be when they grow up.” She says, “It’s fascinating to see how kids today are so grossly immersed in video games or just watching them that they can’t believe it when adults like what they like, too...So many kids that come into my classroom are baffled at how I like video games and decorate my room the way I do... I think this will definitely be a core memory for these kids and It feels good to be able to be someone they can relate to.”... “I hope my relatability can influence their future.”



# Majoring In Gaming?

BY ZACH CARROLL

It's purple. It's quiet. The room almost feels like it's straight out of a Marvel movie and I just walked into Thanos' lair, but in all truthfulness I'm just on NSU's campus. Walking in it smells strange, almost new, but there is a mix of sweat and keyboard dust. Everything is hot to the touch and the air feels too thin to even breathe. The Overwatch team is there practicing and watching in awe. There are people dying and they are yelling at each other and the PC's mouse is moving all around the table. What are they even doing?

Northwestern State University is home to one of the biggest E-sports venues in Louisiana. It was one of the first state-of-the-art facilities on a college campus and get this-they also hand out certain scholarships. Opening in January 2021, and located in the Student Union, it has become a home to both competitive and everyday gamers. The venue is free for current students offering many varieties of games like PS4, PC, and Nintendo Switch.

Being in an environment like that can be scary for someone who has 0 experience. Having a

guide or someone to show you the ropes is a must. That's when my good buddy Bert offered some help. Bert is a student here at NSU and he is a gaming fanatic, as a freshman he visits the Esports venue multiple times a week. So he made the perfect candidate. He showed me around and told me the basic rules, like how I wasn't allowed anywhere near the stage because that's where the teams practice and play.

One of the coolest parts of the place is how spacious the room is and there was this cool graffiti wall that spells out Northwestern State. It's bright and it is covered in orange and purple. In the bottom corner there is a small hand drawn Vic the Demon holding his baby pitchfork. And above the big letters that read Northwestern State you see the columns which are a big symbol around our campus.

We sat down at the part of the room where the Ps4 is located and he kind of gave me a run down of what I could do and honestly it was more comforting than I thought. Just based on the fact that I have a PS5 of my own, it felt like I fit in and knew what I was doing. He was running me through how to play the game and it wasn't for him I would have had no idea what was going on.

Just walking in and asking people questions seemed a little weird, especially if you don't know who these people are and what they might say. So finding someone on the team without knowing anyone may be a little hard.







After having a conversation with the Esports night supervisor, Kasey Moore, I learned what it's like to be in her shoes for a day. She has to come in everyday from 2-9 and she has been doing this since the first semester NSU welcomed the Esports center. Matter of fact she was the very first person to be hired by the venue.

Her day consists of coming into the center just as the League of Legends and Siege captains come into to start their day. She makes sure everything is cleaned and updated along with checking the competitive gaming computers and making sure there are no bugs or online bots in the system that can interfere with the teams' chances of competing. Along with setting up the computers to every gamers needs.

Most every sports team has a captain and the captain is someone who is more advanced. They must practice everyday for 3 hours. Along with that teams are only allowed to play one game due to the fact that it takes so much time for them to concentrate on one game.

Gamers have to keep up with all the players on their team and enroll into tournaments, and every bit of money comes from fundraising they put on for the center. And they must have a 2.6 GPA. One aspect of the Esports center I had no idea about was the scholarship opportunities they can get. They only offer one scholarship

at the moment, which is the recruitment scholarship. Only incoming freshmen can apply for the scholarship and they must send in clips and highlights of what game they are trying to play.

The state of the art venue is open to students to play any game and any style except for the open portion where the competitive gamers play.

One of the last things you need to know about the sports center is everything they have to offer. They have all Alienware software for your general use of PCs, Nintendo Switches, PS4s, and Xboxes.

They have 6 teams that consist of Overwatch, Call of Duty, Rocket League, Valorant, Siege, and League of Legends.

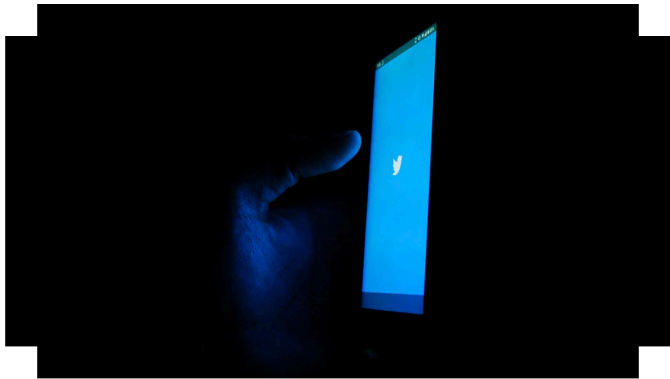
If you haven't checked out the center you can find it located at the bottom of the Student Union. Don't worry, it's the only new looking building around. And it's open until 9 everyday.

Along with it being free for students, any student that has an interest in competing or playing professionally can join, the NSU Esports Club Team. It offers students a chance to showcase their skills in games like Rocket League and many others. The program is growing everyday and if you want to join, all you have to do is reach out to the Director of Competitive Sports, Jason Stelly.

# Breaking The Gaming-Glass Ceiling

BY KATY RIGOL

I woke up on this cold February morning to several Twitter notifications, all replies to my comment about an FPS (first-person shooter) player whom I didn't think was the greatest of all time. The night before, I had written on Twitter "not that impressive to me," before heading to sleep. When the sun rose, I grabbed my phone before tapping the bell icon to see exactly what the overall response was, but I had a feeling already that it wasn't going to be pleasant. As a gamer and woman in esports, I expect trollish remarks.



"Cry more" and "Get a grip" were the first comments. Although these are pretty common phrases in flame wars, I couldn't help but feel I was being dismissed as hysterical. The next ones, after I had blocked the people who first commented, called me a 'ho' and another one called me a "fraud." All of this stirred a burning feeling in my stomach. I felt the familiar spiral of anxiety begin, wondering if I had just picked a battle I shouldn't have. I vented into the Twitter void: "Got called a 'ho' for blocking a troll." I told my parents, and they were shocked, but I played it off as kind of funny so they wouldn't worry. I have been gaming since I was five-years-old, but this was my rude awakening to toxicity on social media.

First, I blocked those Twitter accounts, which mostly boasted profile pics of men on vacation, with blank bios and minimal followers. That signaled to me that they were only on Twitter to argue. Their lack of communication skills frustrated me, but the feeling that I deserved the stings of their name-calling crept in. After all, I had expressed an opinion that was as bold as it was unpopular. I started to think maybe I was the one trolling. Feeling that some of these comments had to do with my gender, I opened up a new app: if anyone would support me in this social media mini crisis, I hoped it would be the community "Made By Women, For Women." However, all I really received were consolations about my experience like "sorry," leaving my string of public Tweets explaining my thoughts and actions in this situation with no engagement, as just a random speech to a nonexistent (or uncaring) audience.

While the first people I had turned to declined to show up on the Twitter battlefield, my esports team's leader, who fittingly goes by the name Ares (the Greek god of war), silenced these trolls with unflinching insults. It must have been a surprise to them that a man came to my defense instead of adding to their consensus. Rather than feeling like a rescued damsel in distress, I felt reassured and empowered knowing that I had an ally who would happily fight fire with fire.

My boss Tweeted back to the troll "You're a misogynistic bum. Speaking of which, send my best to your sis." He referred to them as "small-minded trolls" holding back "an industry that is advancing everyday." He added: "Disrespect my family and I'll meet you on the frontline myself." Our team's

hashtag was #BlueShield; this experience helped me build my own shield.

After leaving the team to pursue paid writing opportunities and joining another team to complete an internship, I found that my new boss was also an advocate for women's rights to thrive in gaming and esports. He says that the equality initiatives from his experiences in the military help in this business.

Still, I was facing a glass ceiling when it came to the uneven numbers of men and women around me. Although nearly half of gamers are women according to Statista, far more pro gamers are men. Amongst the 30-or-so people at my first ever in-person esports event this summer in Metairie, only four among my teammates and other guests were women.

## WOMEN'S ESPORTS LEAGUES

There are some leagues and teams that are for women and marginalized genders only. For example, the esports organization Cloud9 has a female division known as C9 White. Valorant player Katja "Katsumi" Pfahnl has told dot.LA in regards to Cloud9, "They made it clear to us that we weren't going to be a token" and "They really wanted us to accomplish what we wanted to accomplish and they were willing to give us the resources."

Despite the success this team has garnered in "Game Changers" (GC), measures like this women's-only league and others will ideally become unnecessary in the future. Player Melanie "meL" Capone has said via TwitLonger, "The endgame was never GC," alluding to her intention of competing



(Pictured Above Cloud9 White)

with the best in the world. My thought: whether men or woman or any gender, the best players will hopefully all share the same stage one day.

Given the sexism throughout the young history of esports, pipelines like GC are currently needed to level the playing field. As MeL explained to dot.LA, "It's definitely hard to be on the come up if you're a new player and you're female," adding, "There's a lot of harassment and definitely some discrimination either consciously or even unconsciously."

Kastumi summarizes on Twitter the benefits and current necessity in saying, "womens leagues allow me to compete full time and dedicate 100% of myself to the goal of playing in t1," with T1 referring to "Tier 1" of competitive esports, currently male-dominated. However, times are changing, and Cloud9 White is leading the surge.

## HERO SHOOTERS

In games like Valorant, characters are pre-made, and players choose theirs based on abilities rather than appearance or gender. In this way, the hero-shooter genre has alleviated my fear of creating a female character, whom I feel obligated should resemble me, but which I also fear will give trolls on my team or against the ammunition to insult me based on my gender.

Still, I don't unmute myself much anymore when playing online. When I streamed my gameplay on Twitch for small audiences last year, the chat always read, "Your voice is so soft" and "How old are you?" I assumed my lack of a camera would prevent weird inquiries, but my voice gave me away. Thankfully, hero-shooters like Apex Legends allow me to stay muted if I so choose. While communications is key in gaming, there are now ways to communicate things like enemy location, resource needs, and intentions via "pings," little visual and audio markers that appear to teammates at the click of a button.

More importantly, Apex Legends has added multiple characters of different races, genders, and orientations. Most players appreciate the lore of each character and thoughtfully make use of their varying tactical strengths and weaknesses. The backlash to these additions hardly ceases, but the developers and the majority of the community persevere in the face of sexism and other prejudices.



## TODAY:

Now when I wake up in the morning to a pile of Twitter notifications, I feel less anxiety. I'm hopeful for the future, but I know it will take time. I can only imagine the obstacles women before me have faced on their journey as pro gamers, or any professional field. In my chosen field of communications, there are more women journalists today but even with the progress, there is regression. When I looked up "women sportscaster" on Google, I was met with half a dozen posts like "Top 10 Hottest Female Sportscasters." That makes me wonder if and when the playing field in sports of all kinds, including esports, will ever be leveled. I now I know that I am not the problem... I am part of the solution.

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*Anna & Katy*