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Technology

TOP STORY



New Video Games Aims To Teach Kids How To Combat Global Warming

May 15, 2007

It's one of the most pressing issues facing the world today: the world itself and what we as humans have done to it. In the following report, Tech Beat reporter Adam Balkin introduces us to a video game that aims to help undo global warming.

Our kids can save us, and maybe a video game is the perfect way to teach them how. That's the hope of the so-called edutainment developers at www.kidscom.com who've just launched a new game that not only teaches kids about global warming but also what they can do about it.

"The name of the game is "The Adventures of the Idea Seekers," and we're talking about Sarillion's Climate Crisis. And that is the virtual world that we're using to emulate all the things that are happening in the real world," says Jori Clarke of www.kidscom.com.

"There's actually two key messages that we're getting across to children. First of all that climate change has happened throughout time. What we're trying to tell them is the human impact that we're having right now, and how that's swinging the balance of things, and that's how they can get involved. So they will be learning in the game what's happening in the virtual world and that will translate into behaviors they can change in the real world. And they'll learn everything from turning off lights and eating food that's locally grown and making sure they don't ask mom to drive them the block but they actually get on their bikes or walk for that block," Clarke continues.

One of the big challenges though is how deep to get into the complexities of the climate changes. Believe it or not though, the game does not wade in the shallow end. In fact, researchers from Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory lab were brought in to make sure the game is as accurate and thorough as possible.

"Children are much more willing to accept these new ideas and concepts than are adults; that's why we're targeting the children," says Mike Purdy of Columbia University. "Because we believe by explaining to them and respecting their intelligence, by not over simplifying the issues, but by explaining to them the very complexity of this issue, we can convince them that it's real and persuade them that behavior change is important for the future."

The game, designed for kids between the ages of seven and 15 is available online now for free. And while a title like this may have trouble competing with those where kids get to save the earth from, say, aliens, developers insist they worked with a team of seven to 15-year-olds to make sure kids have enough fun to stick with it long enough to hopefully save the earth from humans.

- Adam Balkin

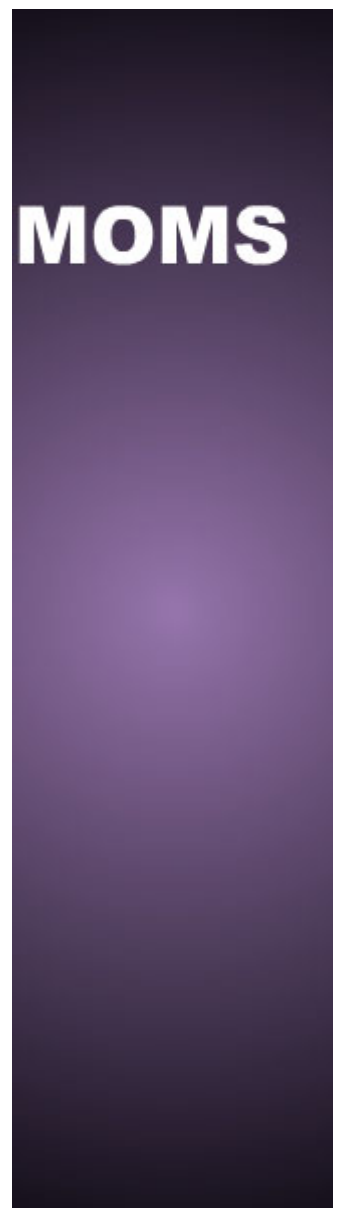
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Adam Balkin
 Adam Balkin covers the technology beat for NY1 News. He is the champion of NY1's "Hat Trick" hockey video arcade game.

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