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Source: Digitalmill, Inc.

Games for Health Project Receives Major Funding

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Effort Will Explore and Assist Emerging Use of Game Technologies in Health Care

PORTLAND, Maine, Dec. 21 /PRNewswire/ -- The Serious Games Initiative, a joint effort between Digitalmill, Inc. and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, today announced that Digitalmill has received a two-year grant from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to support the Games for Health Project.

Games for Health is designed to promote best practices, community building, and research into how cutting-edge game design and development methodologies can aid in the creation of health tools that range from direct patient application, to personal health education, and workforce initiatives.

"Games are already playing a role in health care today," said Ben Sawyer, president of Digitalmill, which will run day-to-day activities and planning for Games for Health. "We have exercise games, games that help with phobia treatment, games used for treating pain related to cancer or burns, and games used to train health care workers in important new procedures. We're not starting at zero. We've already showcased more than a dozen projects, including commercial products that prove there is a potentially pervasive role for games and gamelike software in health care."

Funding provided by RWJF will be used to continue the efforts already under way and to create new resources for assembling a comprehensive community to aid developers and users of games as solutions to a variety of health problems. Examples of these applications include the following:

- **Dance Dance Revolution:** The popular dance game from Konami features an exercise mode. You set goals and play while it reports calorie burn from game sessions.
- **Iceworld and Splash:** Gamelike 3D environments are now being used to help patients cope with severe pain resulting from burns and cancer treatment.
- **Yourself! Fitness:** Designed to be the workout for the videogame generation. It provides dynamic personal workout sessions using state-of-the-art 3D game graphics and environments.
- **Code Orange:** Helps hospitals deal with the rapid decision making required to deal effectively with mass-casualty events.
- **Cardiac Arrest:** A computer adventure game that simulates the diagnosis and treatment procedures for people suffering from various forms of cardiac arrest.
- **VR Phobia:** The Virtual Reality Medical Center has modified commercial games to create effective treatments for patients suffering from common phobias, including fear of flying, spiders, heights, and driving.

"With this funding we can ensure that the promise games hold for health care is fulfilled," said David Rejeski, director of the Foresight and Governance Project at the Wilson Center. "This is a great recognition not only for our Games for Health Project but for the entire field of serious games. The talent and vision of game developers enable a kind of creative problem solving that health care field professionals are eager to engage. Our project will make this easier to do."

"Games are a powerful new media form, and like books, movies, and television, they can play a positive role in health and health care," said Chinwe Onyekere, program associate at The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "As the early efforts already show, that role could be quite exciting. "Digitalmill and the Wilson Center have made significant progress in bringing together a community of game developers and health professionals. Our support is aimed to help grow and nurture the advancement of this emerging field through the recognition of games as a potential medium for improving health and health care."

Games for Health Conference Extended to 2005 and 2006

Games for Health announced that with the new funding it will be extending its health care and games conference into 2005 and 2006. In September 2004, Games for Health, in partnership with the Academic ADL Co-Lab and the Federation of American Scientists Learning Federation Project, held Games for Health 2004 in Madison, Wisconsin. This first-ever conference covering the intersection of games and health care attracted more than 120 participants and speakers who discussed the latest game-based health care technology, including exercise pads and bikes connected to off-the-shelf videogames for exercise, nutritional education games, and simulations of mass casualty treatment in hospitals.

Details on Games for Health 2005 will be announced in March.

About Games for Health

Games for Health is a project produced by The Serious Games Initiative (<http://www.seriousgames.org>), a Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars effort that applies games and game technologies to a range of public and private policy, leadership, and management issues.

The Initiative founded Games for Health to develop a community and best practices platform for games being built for health care applications. To date the project has brought together researchers, medical professionals, and game developers to share information about the impact games and game technologies can have on health care and policy. This includes an effort to catalog the current use of games in health care.

For more information about Games for Health, see <http://www.gamesforhealth.org>.

About The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, based in Princeton, N.J., is the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care. It concentrates its grantmaking in four goal areas: to assure that all Americans have access to quality health care at reasonable cost; to improve the quality of care and support for people with chronic health conditions; to promote healthy communities and lifestyles; and to reduce the personal, social and economic harm caused by substance abuse -- tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs.

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