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FOCUS: MANY OF THE NEWEST VIDEO GAMES ARE SOAKED WITH SEX AND VIOLENCE, PITTING ALLIES OF VIDEO GAMES AGAINST THEIR ENEMIES IN A GAME OF IMMORAL COMBAT

Gaming can boost kids' skills, but at what cost?



DERIK HOLTSMANN/News-Democrat

Auston Bahorich, 12, played "Counter Strike" at Impact Gaming Center in Fairview Heights.

BY JENNIFER A. BOWEN
AND SCOTT WUERZ
Belleville News-Democrat

When a 12-year-old sits in front of a video game, figuring out how to get through levels, solve puzzles and develop characters, he could be learning more from the game than he does in school.

When he gets through the level by spraying opponents with bullets and splattering bloody body parts, is he still learning?

James Paul Gee, an education professor at the University of Wisconsin, recently published a book stating that merely by the way they are designed, video games teach children more than they are learning by traditional classroom methods. Most games involve a player immersing themselves in a character and investing time and thought in the character, something that can increase learning.

Even violent games where the main character earns a living through crime, such as "Grand Theft Auto: Vice City," can teach kids a thing or two about creative thinking, planning and decision-making, Gee said. It can prepare them for a technology-based future.

But Gee's claims are coming after reams of

Please see FOCUS, A7

Miquelon to miss big coup

Pharmaceutical giant to pay \$622 million for alleged fraud

BY MIKE FITZGERALD
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BELLEVILLE — The agents from the FBI began showing up at the Calvin Johnson Care Center, 727 N. 17th St., more than two years ago. Their questions centered on a company called Ross Products, the maker of feeding tubes and pumps for patients too sick to swallow food on their own.

The agents, however, reassured Calvin Johnson administrators the nursing home was not being investigated, said Steve Wolf, president of the company that operates Calvin Johnson.

"With us they were just after Ross," Wolf said.

The FBI agents' visits to Calvin Johnson, as well as other metro-east nursing homes, will soon culminate in a way that Wolf could never have predicted.



Miquelon

Federal prosecutors in the next 10 days plan to announce a stunning coup: Pharmaceutical giant Abbott Laboratories, the Chicago-based corporate parent of Ross, has agreed to pay the U.S. government \$622 million, according to a stockholder notice from Abbott. The money will be paid to settle allegations that Ross conspired with health care companies to defraud Medicare by overbilling for feeding tubes, electric pumps and related equipment.

It is one of the biggest health care fraud settlements in United States history, springing from what most people would expect to be a legal backwater. And it is coming just as the woman

Please see COUP, A7

Mayor seeks OK for ID cards for Mexicans

Some wary of 'matricula' cards

BY MIKE FITZGERALD
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FAIRMONT CITY — Mayor Alex Bregen plans to make a bit of history next week, and in so doing, plunge headlong into an increasingly rancorous national debate over the status of Mexican citizens, both legal and illegal, in America.

Bregen said he plans to ask the village board of trustees when it meets Wednesday to vote on a resolution declaring as valid the "matricula consular" ID cards the Mexican government is handing out in rapidly growing numbers to its citizens in the United States.

The cards are photo IDs that resemble American driver's licenses. Protected by a hologram, these cards contain information substantiated by the Mexican government, though critics complain its verification methods are sketchy at best.

Still, Bregen said, the matricula cards make perfect sense for the people of Fairmont City, 60 percent of whose 2,400 residents were born in Mexico.

"This just gives them an identity. This card just clears everything up," Bregen said. "I shouldn't have to have any questions if I go to a bank or apply for a job."

The matricula cards allow bearers to open

Please see MEXICANS, A2

Students meet death up close in science workshop

BY TANIA E. LOPEZ
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Seventeen-year-old Maggie Burnworth wants to go into medicine doing research on children with learning disabilities.

To get there, she was standing next to a cadaver in a lab permeated by the stench of formaldehyde at the St. Louis Metropolitan Medical Society Building.

"It's freaky, isn't it?" said Maggie crossing her arms over her stomach. "They want kids to do this and they want us to learn."

Her lesson used the body of a woman who donated her body to science so students like Maggie could explore medicine.

In this case, if Maggie wanted to learn what the inside of the female reproductive system looked like, it was on display.

"They shoot liquid latex in their veins and arteries to preserve them," Maggie said, clasping her hands.

Maggie is an incoming senior at Althoff Catholic High School in Belleville who is taking part in the Adventures in Medicine and Science Summer Workshop sponsored by St. Louis University.

Please see DEATH, A2

Church reaches out to Iraqis camped nears U.S. POW camp

Members hope to get family relocated

BY JENNIFER A. BOWEN
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A Belleville church hopes to bring a destitute Iraqi woman and her three young children here to live.

The family is camped within the perimeter of a U.S. military POW camp in Iraq and has asked for help. The woman's husband divorced her, and she is recovering from injuries she received in a beating from him. Paramedics evaluated her injuries and determined they are healing well.

With nowhere to go, she and her children set up camp at the military camp. Their needs are being met by the camp and soldiers who volunteer time and money to help them. One of the volunteers is St. George's Episcopal Church pastor Christo-



Special to the News-Democrat

St. George's Episcopal Church hopes to bring Iraqi Jamella Gashe and her children to the United States.

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- Lotto: 7-17-36-39-47-52
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FOR MISSOURI

- Daily Pick 3: 3-3-2
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