

THE 11TH ANNUAL GAMES FOR CHANGE FESTIVAL

APRIL 22-26 2014

11th Annual Games for Change Festival

APRIL 22-24 & APRIL 26, 2014

MEDIA COVERAGE REPORT





SECTIONS

Notable Quotes

Event Photos

Broadcast Coverage

Print Coverage

Online Coverage

MEDIA IMPRESSIONS OVERVIEW

	Hits	Impressions
Broadcast	4	1,722,160
Print	19	2,897,078
Online	413	637,101,044
Total	434	641,720,282

Sunshine Sachs



Notable Quotes

“Each year, I go to Games for Change because it is the place where game developers that are truly pushing the boundaries of video games showcase their work. At the festival, we see games that reimagine the act of gaming—what can it do? What can it mean? We see games that think critically about learning, teaching, playing, and storytelling.”
– **Jordan Shapiro, Forbes.com**

“Since 2004, the conference has pushed at the limits of what's possible in a video game, helping bring the field into the mainstream. Recent keynote speakers have included retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who in 2008 oversaw development of the popular iCivics games, and former Vice President Al Gore, who in 2011 told festival attendees, ‘Games are the new norm.’”
– **Greg Toppo, USA Today**

“Far removed from the military battles, zombie attacks and alien uprisings that dominate the multibillion-dollar video game industry, Games for Change is focused on lesser-known titles that treat the medium as something more than entertainment. The organization’s festival has become a platform to introduce video games with altruistic goals.”
– **Laura Parker, New York Times**

“This year's Games for Change Festival teams up with the Tribeca Film Festival to broaden its scope and approach to the discussion and examination of games dedicated to social change. Speakers at the three-day show in New York City include scientists, researchers, developers big and small and economists. Those experts gathered to discuss everything from fictional future games to the impact of gaming on education and the promise of gaming as medicine.”
– **Brian Crecente, Polygon.com**

“But before the project began and workers picked up tools, community members were asked to pick up a keyboard and mouse and reimagine this park inside of Minecraft. It's part of the United Nations' Block by Block program, which asks community members to redesign public spaces in need inside the popular sandbox game that allows players to build anything within the limits of their imaginations.”
– **Chelsea Stark, Mashable.com**

“Video games with a social impact: Yes, it's a thing! And awards are given out annually at the Games for Change Festival. We like the idea of socially conscious video games, especially because video games are so popular and aren't going anywhere. Here are eight of the games competing.”
– **Christian Salazar, amNewYork**

“Statistics show that gaming has outgrown its reputation as an activity for children and teenagers. The average age of players is now 30, 10 years older than it was a decade ago. There are games for women in their 30s, and games for seniors to combat declines in mental function.”
– **Edward Helmore, The Guardian**



Event Photos





BROADCAST COVERAGE





Fusion – The Morning Show
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Festival Spotlights Video Games That Help Teach Social Lessons

By: Adam Balkin 04/29/2014 05:30 AM

Text size: + -    





Al Jazeera

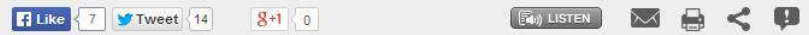
April 23, 2014

AMERICAS

TriBeCa launches ethical video games

Organisers at film festival have introduced video games as part of the entertainment, and the games come with a twist.

Last updated: 23 Apr 2014 16:04



This year at the TriBeCa film festival, organisers are introducing video games as part of the entertainment.

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Tribeca Family Festival

Peter Downing, creative director and producer of the Tribeca Family Festival, has an inside look at this free event and what guests can expect.

Apr 25, 2014




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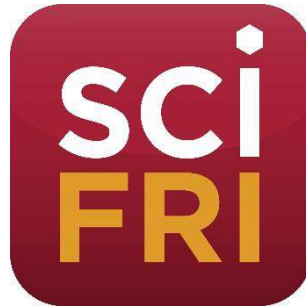
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NOW PLAYING Tribeca Family Festival 3:54



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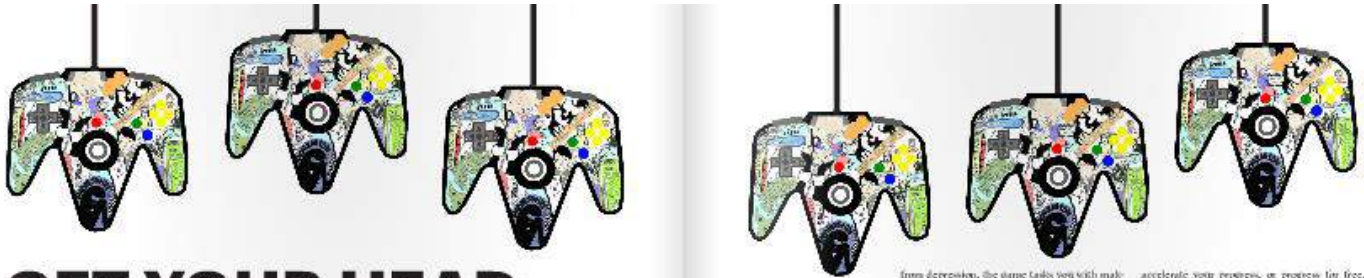
April 23, 2014
Circulation: 325,469

VIDEO GAMES

GAMING 4 CHANGE

See the eight games
competing in the annual
Games for Change Fest:
amny.com/ent

TN2 (Trinity College) Magazine
March 25, 2014



GET YOUR HEAD IN THE GAME

PADDY CREMEN EXPLORES A NEW MOVEMENT DEDICATED TO INSPIRING SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH VIDEO GAMES, PIONEERED BY THE NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION GAMES FOR CHANGE

Movies, books and other forms of entertainment have long been responsible for redrawing our beliefs and inspiring social movements. For these types of media, it's not only allowed but applauded to address uncomfortable issues ranging from slavery to mental health. These themes, however, are often thought to be outside the realm of video games. Games are at best seen as a form of escapism, and at worst a social plague moving children into an endless virtual daze. Games for Change seek to counteract this, and to realise the positive potential inherent in games. The non-profit organisation seeks to promote what have been called "social impact games". Games for Change's Meghan Vozma described the product as games "that address real world issues or experiences that really range from the documentary style games to the more autobiographical where people just talk about their own experiences". One such game places you in the shoes of a reporter to Daegu, facing the player to face the same challenges as the real world reporters who developed the game. Another uses a series of mini games to display the challenges confronting those who undergo hormone replacement therapy.

It's an innovative concept, and Vozma is honest about how most people view video games. When it comes to trying to demonstrate how effective

these games can be, Vozma said, "It's definitely a problem." However, Games for Change have made some impressive strides in the virtual battle. This year's annual festival, the highlight of the Games for Change calendar, will be held as part of the Tribeca Film Festival. It's a momentous moment not just for social impact games, but for the industry as a whole.

At the same time, social impact games are becoming an increasingly prevalent part of the gaming ecosystem, with more games reaching popular platforms such as Steam. One such game, *Depression Quest*, serves as an excellent example of how effective the games can be in trying to help players understand complex issues. The text-based, choice-based, non-adventure style game deals with its subject matter with a maturity and frankness that is rarely seen in the industry. Placing the player in the position of a young adult suffering



from depression, the game tasks you with making choices that in turn affect your depression level. The more depressed the player is, the less choices are available to them.

If it sounds dreary and intense that's because it is. Unsurprisingly, those looking for a traditional video game adventure won't find it in a game titled *Depression Quest*. Unlike most games, the goal is not to provide the player with a sense of accomplishment, or even to tell a story. For creator Zoe Quinn, the game is designed as both an attempt to help people try to understand the challenges facing those with depression, while also trying to help those who do suffer realize they are not alone.

It's a sharp contrast to the traditional video game archetype of empowering the player. As Vozma puts it, the strength of social impact games is not only the amount of agency they give the player, but also the lack of agency. *Depression Quest* places you in ordinary situations, and demonstrates how depression can take away your ability to make everyday choices.

It seems much harder to find a way of putting together positive Facebook games like Farmville as anything but a narrow waste of time. But these games are a critical part of the social impact gaming network. One such game, *Solan Challenge*, boldly claims to "redeem the entire field of wasting time".

The game itself feels a lot like Farmville, but with one major difference. Instead of earning money, energy and other gamplay elements, the player earns "impact" points that can be used to invest in schools, hospitals and other African aid projects.

As with most social games, you either pay to

accelerate your progress, or progress for free, either slowly increasing or by spamming your Facebook friends with invites until they block you. On the other hand, no matter how you progress, you still earn impact points. So even if you never spend a cent, you can nevertheless contribute toward these projects. It's impressive that River Island Games could make such a modest work, even if they are leading a hazardous amount of legitimacy to those prone to procrastination.

However, it's also clear that social impact games are still in their infancy. Many of the games could perhaps be better classified as promising experiments as opposed to fully fledged experiences. The most successful of the games often feel under an hour, allowing their statement to be made without dwelling long enough to reveal the often rudimentary game mechanics that lie beneath.

It's clear that Games for Change are really starting to gather momentum. Some of the most prominent figures in social activism are now leading their support to the project. "When former vice president Al Gore came to our festival and keynote, and talked about how games are the new normal, that was really exciting." At the same time, the games are rapidly progressing in both quality and popularity. Last March, the company developed their own Facebook game: *Half the Sky*, which became a breakout success. The game, launched in March, has already reached one million elsewhere and raised over half a million dollars for various causes.

Games for Change now has international chapters spanning everywhere from South Korea to Israel. Through events like the Tribeca Film Festival they are penetrating the mainstream, and through platforms like Steam they are keeping their mark in gaming culture. It's becoming increasingly evident that this is a new, mature, and rapidly evolving medium that allows people to channel their creativity in ways never before possible. Books, movies and other forms of entertainment have long sure used their unique tools to address some of society's most important issues. Now, with games, there is a whole new set of tools available.

ILLUSTRATION BY ALICE HEALON

The New York Times

April 21, 2014

Circulation: 1,865,318

Not Just Playing Around Anymore

Games for Change Uses Video Games for Social Projects



A view of a section of Haiti as seen via the game Minecraft, left, and in an aerial photograph. UN-Habitat

This year, a United Nations program devoted to urban planning in countries affected by poverty or natural disasters began developing a sports field in the slums of Kibera, Kenya, designing it in the popular sandbox video game Minecraft. The game, which allows players to build entire worlds out of cubes in a 3-D environment, helped the project leaders create a visual representation of the field that could be easily understood by the neighborhood's residents.

"The game makes everything transparent," said Pontus Westerberg, a digital projects officer at the program, UN-Habitat. "It gives the communities we work with more agency and helps everyone see what's going on."

The project, known as [Block by Block](#), is among the highlights this week at the [Games for Change Festival](#) in New York, an annual event that promotes video games that seek social change. These efforts — known as serious games — once focused on education, to entice students to learn through digital play. But attention has shifted to more ambitious efforts like Block by Block, and a large part of that push has come from Games for Change, a nonprofit organization founded in 2004 that has worked with Google, NASA, the United Nations, the Rockefeller Foundation and TEDx.

Far removed from the military battles, zombie attacks and alien uprisings that dominate the multibillion-dollar video game industry, Games for Change is focused on lesser-known titles that treat the medium as something more than entertainment. The organization's festival has become a platform to introduce video games with altruistic goals.

This year's event, from Tuesday through Thursday, and again on Saturday, is being held with the [Tribeca Film Festival](#), a first-time partnership. While video games have had a presence at the film festival — Rockstar's L.A. Noire was shown to audiences there in 2011, as was Sony's Beyond: Two Souls in 2013 — this partnership represents a more formal integration of games and films, with Games for Change becoming an official part of the festival's Innovation Week.

Two projects have particularly helped Games for Change become a leading advocate for serious games: The first was [PeaceMaker](#), a simulation designed by a small team at Carnegie Mellon University in 2005. The game places players in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by asking them to make social, political and military decisions based on actual events.

The project was initiated by Asi Burak, the president of Games for Change, who once served as a captain in the Israel Defense Forces. Mr. Burak now lives in Manhattan with his wife and two daughters and credits his work on the game for helping him to earn legal United States residency.



Asi Burak, the president of Games for Change, in Manhattan. His nonprofit group supports video games with social agendas. Jennifer S. Altman for The New York Times

The second major undertaking was a collaboration between Games for Change and Half the Sky Movement, a global project based on the best-selling book "Half the Sky: Turning Oppression Into Opportunity for Women Worldwide," by the married team of Nicholas D. Kristof, a columnist for The New York Times, and Sheryl WuDunn, a former journalist at The Times. The project uses television, online and interactive media to raise awareness of women's issues. In 2012, PBS ran a mini-series on the movement, focusing on issues like sex trafficking and gender violence in Africa, India and Asia.

The [game component](#), Half the Sky Movement: The Game, was introduced on Facebook in 2013, giving players virtual tasks, like collecting books for young girls in Kenya, that can translate into tangible results. For instance, collecting 250,000 in-game books unlocks a donation of real books to Room to Read, a nonprofit organization focused on improving literacy and gender equality in developing countries. Players can also make donations to the game's nonprofit partners. The online-only game has since reached 1.25 million players, according to Games for Change.

One speaker at this year's festival is [Zoran Popovic](#), the director of the Center for Game Science at the University of Washington, in Seattle. He led the team of researchers responsible for the puzzle game Foldit, which sought to crowdsource a solution to a scientific problem. Foldit asked players to take on the role of a biochemist and map out how proteins might be folded in nature. The game provided scores based on how well they performed. Three papers in the journal Nature have been published, based on Foldit discoveries, since the game's release in 2008; [the most famous](#), in 2011, explained how Foldit players had helped to decipher the structure of an AIDS-related enzyme, a problem that scientists had been trying to solve for years.

Mr. Popovic plans to unveil a new project this week, a synthetic-biology game called NanoCrafter, whose goal is to discover molecular structures that could benefit vaccine and cancer research.

For Mr. Burak, the future of serious gaming depends on two things: persuading top designers to work for Games for Change and putting social-impact games into the hands of everyday players.

“Gaming is social, participatory and has learning at its core,” Mr. Burak said. “These are powerful things for social impact, and it makes sense for us to take full advantage of it.”

April 12, 2014

Circulation: 196,425

Ethical gaming: can video games be a force for good?

The online [Games for Change Festival](#) is linking with the Tribeca Film Festival to promote peace and creativity



Games such as Minecraft, are 'amazingly creative experiences and far more engaging than watching TV'. Photograph: Observer

A decade ago Asi Burak developed a video game designed to encourage opposing parties in the Israel-Palestine dispute over land to better understand – even empathise – with each other's point of view. That conflict may be no closer to a resolution, but the concept that interactive [games](#) can be used for more than mere entertainment, even as a tool for positive change, is looking like the next big thing in online gaming.

Next week, Burak's 11th annual [Games for Change Festival](#) will join forces with New York's prestigious [Tribeca Film Festival](#) in an effort to give video games greater recognition and counter the stereotype that this £39bn global industry can specialise only in war games, urban chaos and medieval fantasy.

"People understand that games are powerful, but they're also scared of this power," says Burak. "We need to change the perception that all games are shallow, violent and childish, because they are not."

Statistics show that gaming has outgrown its reputation as an activity for children and teenagers. The average age of players is now 30, 10 years older than it was a decade ago.

There are games for women in their 30s, and games for seniors to combat declines in mental function.

Collectively, the world now spends one billion hours every day playing video games – up more than 50% in three years. Meanwhile, the average young person racks up 10,000 hours playing video games by the age of 21, only slightly less than the time they spend in secondary education.

"People see the negative side and they talk about addiction, but there are many games on the positive side," says Burak. Games such as *Minecraft*, he adds, are "amazingly creative experiences and far more engaging than watching TV".

The festival will bring together leading software developers and thinkers on the subject, including Jenova Chen, co-founder of thatgamecompany and creator of the games *Journey* and *Flower*, and Jane McGonigal, the author of *Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World*. McGonigal's thesis is that games can effect change in problems ranging from depression and obesity to global issues such as poverty and climate change.

Many of the new studies claim a wide variety of benefits from gaming, including improved attention, higher creativity and improved ability to manage difficult emotions, such as fear and anger.

McGonigal, co-founder of the health improvement game *SuperBetter*, believes technological advances in virtual reality will enhance the power of gaming for good. To encourage a change in behaviour, she says, you need more than a video or a pamphlet. "Gaming does seem to be persuasive in changing people's thoughts, attitudes, feelings and actions in a way other mediums cannot."

The author points to a virtual reality game developed at Georgia University that places the player in the sights and sounds of computerised woodland and gives them a virtual chainsaw. They are then required to cut down a tree using a vibrating controller. After the tree falls, the forest goes quiet and birds stop chirping.

"Just two minutes changed people's real-world environmental behaviour for an entire week," says McGonigal. "They used 25% less paper products." People who simply watched a video of trees being cut down did not change their behaviour.

"The visceral immersive experience seemed to make a difference," she says. "People seemed to understand the loss of the tree as the loss of a living thing."

A separate study at Stanford University's Virtual Human Interaction Lab simulated disabilities such as colour blindness. Researchers found that people who experienced blindness not only expressed more empathy but contributed time to volunteer efforts.

The focus on virtual reality in gaming comes as the technology companies begin to invest heavily in the sector. Last month Facebook acquired the virtual-reality goggles maker Oculus for \$2bn, giving a huge potential boost to a technology designed to produce the sensation of not just looking into a virtual-reality world, but actually being an integral part of it.

In announcing the purchase, Facebook's CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, touted virtual reality as the next big computing platform after mobile. McGonigal identifies several companies – including Valve, the creator of Steam; Mojang, creator of *Minecraft*; and Zynga.org – as committed to creating positive experiences. She hopes Facebook will hire thoughtful designers who will be able to connect us to reality, rather than disconnect us from it.

"Who can we have empathy for? What can we have empathy for? And how do we rally the gaming community?"

Chen says the games he grew up with in the 1990s helped him to become self-aware and ultimately a better person. At his company, he says, developers aspire to create interactive entertainment that can touch hearts. *Flower* was recently accepted into the Smithsonian American Art Museum's permanent collection.

He is optimistic about the field of positive game development. "We have a huge video game audience today, but still a rather biased portfolio when it comes to the types of emotions they create and its social impact. Today's game creators are changing that. I believe we will see more and more positive games coming into existence soon."

The technology poses as many questions as it answers. If virtual-reality games connect us to the real world, what does that say about our lack of connection? Are video games a source of "real" happiness? Do the positive emotions contribute to real wellbeing, or are these feelings also virtual?

Philosopher Bernard Suits, author of *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia*, claims that, if we ever create a perfect society, games will be the only reason to go on living. We would have to play, or else have no purpose in our lives, Suits argues, because they can bring a sense of service and collective meaning.

Like real-world reality, there is no single virtual reality, says Burak. It's an open debate. Some want to use virtual reality for behavioural change; some to make political statements. "The festival, he says, "is about the idea that the platform is attractive to anyone interested in social issues."

But, speaking personally, he adds: "I would like to see more design purpose and effort going towards creating empathy."



Weston Magazines (including TriBeCa Magazine)
Spring 2014

11TH ANNUAL GAMES FOR CHANGE FESTIVAL/ THE 2014 TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL®

The 11th Annual Games for Change Festival takes place April 22-24, 2014 at the NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts as part of the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival (TFF), presented by AT&T. In addition, the Games for Change Arcade, which is open to the public, will be held at the TFF Family Festival Street Fair, taking place on Saturday, April 26.



Hosted and created by Games for Change, a non-profit that catalyzes social impact through digital games, the Games for Change Festival is the largest gaming event in New York City, and the leading international event uniting game creators with others who believe in the positive social impact of games.



April 17-23, 2014
Circulation: 141,866

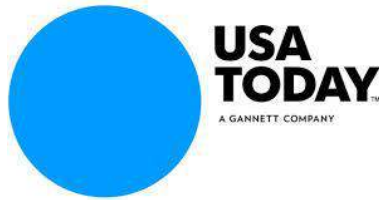
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Tuesday 22

*** 11th Annual Games for Change Festival** Various locations and times (212-242-4922, gamesforchange.org/festival). 9:00am; \$100-\$499. If you've OD'd on Nintendo or Angry Birds, this four-day extravaganza may help you regain your faith in the popular genre of pastimes. Founded to promote games focused on social impact, the fest invites experts like Google's chief game designer Noah Falstein, as well as authorities in related fields, to shed light on ways these diversions can help address global challenges like education, health care and conflict resolution. Post-lecture, relish in some actual playtime by checking out any of the eight games that snagged the fest's annual award.



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**HUFF
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April 15, 2014

Impressions: 44,272,773

At Tribeca Film Festival, Movies Are Only Part Of The Story



NEW YORK (AP) -- The Tribeca Film Festival is now a teenager. And like most teens, its eyes are on a lot of screens.

The 13th annual New York festival, which debuts Wednesday night, will present not just 80-plus feature films, but also an "Innovation Week" that seems designed to capture some of the tech energy of South by Southwest.

The festival will, for the second year, feature a category called Storyscapes, with transmedia exhibits that use multimedia techniques to tell stories. Video games, too, will be mixed in with the 11th annual Games for Change festival.

The addition of other forms of media, though, is also a way to open doors to new audiences. Geoff Gilmore, chief creative officer of Tribeca Enterprises, says festivals need to adapt to increasingly tech-savvy moviegoers.

"What is the new world of story for a new generation?" asks Gilmore. "We find it by showcasing work — including work that's transmedia, including work that's from the Web, including work that's gaming — but also in just different ways of thinking about it. That's the future of film festivals."

April 15, 2014

Impressions: 44,272,773

How The Gaming Industry Helps People Help The World

The social gaming industry is booming. Staggeringly, it comprises a \$9 billion market and is the fastest growing segment of entertainment, engaging hundreds of millions of people from around the world daily. With this ever expanding community of players, game makers have an unprecedented opportunity -- a responsibility, some would say -- to do more to cultivate social games as a platform for social good.

The sale of virtual goods within social gaming is a billion -- that's billion with a "B" -- dollar industry projected to reach more than \$4 billion by 2016. Virtual goods sold, bought or won for charitable causes are also on the rise, making it hard to deny that social games are an emerging mechanism for connecting everyday consumers with causes that matter to them. More exciting is the possibility that consumers may discover a cause or an organization for the first time through a game, suggesting that the gaming business may have an increasing role to play in introducing consumers to philanthropy.

Many organizations -- a number of well-known charities among them -- have embraced games as an optimal and cost-effective method to engage consumers, particularly millennials. Water.org recently announced it raised \$1 million from players of Zynga games like FarmVille2, ChefVille and Zynga Poker. Water.org is not alone -- Save the Children, World Food Programme, Direct Relief and Feeding America have all raised \$1 million or more through games. Some nonprofits have even come together to create greater awareness and resources around a common theme, as was the case with Half the Sky Movement: The Facebook Game, which drew more than 1.2 million players and raised nearly half a million dollars in a few short months. These groups are the early adopters and many more organizations will likely follow in their footsteps, making games less of a novelty and more of a staple.

What other signs are there that games for good have arrived? On April 26, leaders within the gaming industry will join forces with Games for Change and the Tribeca Film Festival to put on the Family Street Fair, bringing the power of games for good directly to more than 300,000 consumers. This direct interaction between consumers and the increasingly mainstream community of game developers, innovators and entrepreneurs who are infusing games with social good is an important milestone for an industry seeking to build long-term relationships with players beyond the screen.

Integrating cause-related content into commercial games is a delicate task, a balancing act between the delights of causal entertainment and the seriousness of real world problems. When it's done well, woven organically into a game, players respond. The fact that not all campaigns produce landslide results is not a bad sign; it just means people are trying, and it's early days. In fact, in a recent survey of

10,000 FarmVille players, 60 percent said they had already donated to a charity while tending their virtual crops, and more than one-third of players said they were introduced to a social issue, and given an immediate opportunity to help, through the game. Nearly one quarter of players said they were inclined to give to the same cause again, outside of the game.

We are now approaching an initial tipping point, where increasing consumer interest in exploring real-world issues through games can be met -- and "leveled up" -- through highly engaging gameplay, sophisticated underlying technology and the incredible creative and technical talents of those in the commercial game industry. Whether this is achieved is largely up to the game makers. How will they respond to growing demand from players who have made it clear they want social impact content in their games? By their very nature, social games evoke collaboration, empathy, even altruism. They attract people who are looking not only for friendly competition but who also want to feel connected and to help others. Gamers -- more than 1 billion of them -- are a good group.

Now is the time for the gaming industry to embrace a new kind of corporate social responsibility -- one that leverages its core products and employee talents to create and deliver meaningful social impact. Making games a place where people more frequently connect with and invest in each other is a natural extension of what great games do, and it should be a natural extension of what great game companies do too.



April 16, 2014

Impressions: 40,927,797

At Tribeca, movies are only part of the story



NEW YORK (AP) -- The Tribeca Film Festival is now a teenager. And like most teens, its eyes are on a lot of screens.

The 13th annual New York festival, which debuts Wednesday night, will present not just 80-plus feature films, but also an "Innovation Week" that seems designed to capture some of the tech energy of South by Southwest.

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"What is the new world of story for a new generation?" asks Gilmore. "We find it by showcasing work — including work that's transmedia, including work that's from the Web, including work that's gaming — but also in just different ways of thinking about it. That's the future of film festivals."



January 21, 2014

Impressions: 36,277,956

Tribeca Film Festival To Explore The Transformative Potential Of Video Games



Games for Change will host their 11th annual festival “as part of the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival, presented by AT&T. In addition, the Games for Change Arcade, which is open to the public, will be held at the Tribeca Film Festival Family Festival Street Fair, taking place on Saturday, April 26.” The festival, which focuses on social impact games will take place on April 22-24, 2014 at the NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts. Games for Change is New York City’s largest gaming event.

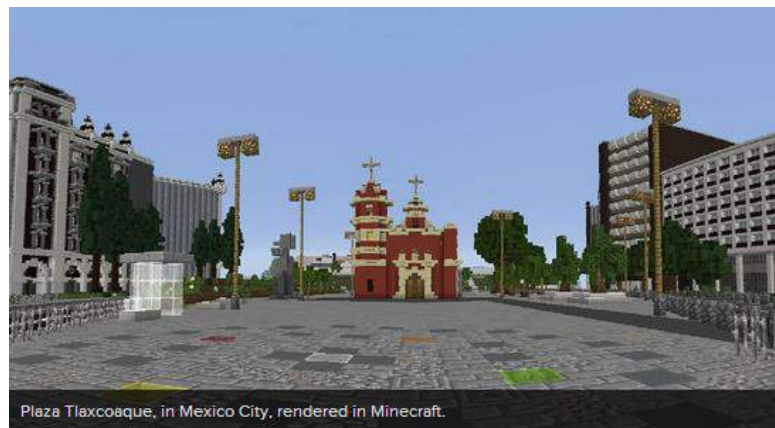
April 21, 2014

Impressions: 33,422,678

How 'Minecraft' is Transforming Developing Cities Around the World

In Haiti, a waterfront in the poorest part of Le Cayes is getting a makeover. The area was prone to flooding from the ocean, affecting the slums.

But before the project began and workers picked up tools, community members were asked to pick up a keyboard and mouse and reimagine this park inside of *Minecraft*. It's part of the United Nations' [Block by Block](#) program, which asks community members to redesign public spaces in need inside the popular sandbox game that allows players to build anything within the limits of their imaginations.



Plaza Tlaxcoaque, in Mexico City, rendered in Minecraft.

"In Haiti, we had a group of fishermen who couldn't read, couldn't write and had never used a computer, design a plan for Place de la Paix," said Pontus Westerberg, Digital Project Manager for [UN Habitat](#). "They built a sea wall to prevent the area from flooding, and added public toilets. These models really let them visualize the changes they want to see in that space."

The fishermen's plan, along with others, was presented to architects, and then rendered as a real architectural design.



The Les Cayes waterfront in Haiti, which is plagued with flooding.

The program was originally started to get people aged 14-25 involved in planning projects in their communities, said Westerberg, because they normally weren't the ones showing up to planning meetings.

"They are the ones going to live in these cities, but it difficult to get them to come

to meetings and participate," Westerberg said. "But *Minecraft* has had 50 million copies sold. We thought when we started it would be a good way to get young people involved."

UN Habitat, a branch of the international organization, works within cities around the world on issues like urban planning, communication between government and its citizens, and securing funding for social services. Block by Block is part of the Global Public Space Program, which wants to upgrade 300 public spaces in the next three years.



The Les Cayes waterfront, rendered in Minecraft.

Public spaces, which include parks, marketplaces and public squares, but also things like streets and sidewalks, are very important for the health of a growing city. A city like New York, which has made public spaces a priority, is 60% public space; Nairobi, a developing city, is only 8 to 10% public space, Westerberg said.

Mobilizing through Minecraft

UN Habitat approached Minecraft's maker, Mojang, in 2012. Westerberg said the company was very receptive, and works with UN Habitat on multiple steps of the process.

Four cities have been added to the Block-by-Block program: Le Cayes; Kiritpur, Nepal; Nairobi, Kenya; and Mexico City. At the start of the program, a UK-based Minecraft modding group [FyreUK](#) builds the region inside the game

Westerberg's team then works with community groups, which could include neighbors, business owners, nearby residents and anyone who would use the space frequently. While UN Habitat had planned to target only younger users, *Minecraft* has been more easy to integrate than they thought.

"After just some basic training, it's amazing how quickly people pick it up," Westerberg said. "It's great seeing groups of people sitting around the computer and working in that kind of way."



"Some people wanted us to use more traditional design software like 3D Studio Max, but I think the multiplayer element is really fascinating. People come into a game together and pick up roles like real life. There are designers doing the layout, builders, and projects managers."

And it's not just easier for community groups to visualize their ideas inside *Minecraft*'s digital landscapes. Despite the blocky appearance,

Westerberg said architects and government groups look at the models as well.

"In the project in Nairobi, there was a disagreement about the size of the football field being built," Westerberg said. "Getting the architects to walk around the model with the community members, they could actually agree on something."

The models are then given to architects, and then presented to the city's governing bodies for consideration.

While funding these projects is often a struggle, Westerberg said, since each costs about \$100,000 and there are 300 in the pipeline. Mojang has also been instrumental in fundraising by tapping its broad player base. The company sells calendars and in-game currency at Walmart that each donate proceeds to Block by Block, and sold a bundle of experimental games through [Humble Bundle](#).

Westerberg will present Block by Block's progress at the [Games for Change Festival](#) held this week in New York City at NYU's Skirball Center for the Performing Arts. Other speakers include Jane McGonigal and [Journey designer Jenova Chen](#).

April 16, 2014

Impressions: 33,422,678

Tapping Into the Emotional Side of Video Games: Developing Hope, Healing and Love

"Video games have always been a part of my life," said Jenova Chen. "I always played games with my friends, but as I got older, my friends stopped playing."

Chen, president and co-founder of [thatgamecompany](#), wondered why that was. While his friends said they were too busy, it wasn't that they didn't have time for other forms of entertainment.

"People still read novels, watched movies, listened to music," he said. "The fact that most of my friends are abandoning games makes me feel sad. How can I help video games not just be for kids, and respected from people of all ages and genders? My dream is to make everyone love video games."



The robed character of 'Journey', released in 2012 for PlayStation 3 by thatgamecompany.

Chen's hypothesis on how to solve this problem came about when he began studying at the University of Southern California's Interactive Media Division. He felt games, which originally came from a software background, divided their genres based on technology they were built around, such as massively multiplayer online games or first-

person shooters. Entertainment genres, however, are divided based on emotions: romantic comedies, action, horror, drama. Chen noticed the range of emotions games catered to only fit certain genres, those generally popular with a young and male audience.

"Look at the genres women like: a romantic comedy game doesn't exist. Few examples of a documentary game exist. What is the equivalent of a real drama game? They don't exist," Chen said.

"Emotion with that complexity for a more mature, older audience are necessary to make medium like video games healthy, so it can be highly respected like the film industry."

But the goal is deeper than respect; Chen hopes that creating games with real emotional weight will improve people's lives. He and thatgamecompany have already seen success with their titles like *FLOW*, *Flower*, *Cloud* and *Journey*, which offer non-traditional gaming experiences that are highly interactive and emotionally engaging.

Journey in particular has had strong emotional reactions from fans, which Chen plans to detail in his upcoming talk for the [Games for Change Festival](#), running April 22-26 in New York City. The 2012 PlayStation 3 game follows a mysterious hooded figure on its journey to reach the top of a mountain, through a desert, a palace, dark caves and treacherous snow. While the experience itself is only two to three hours long, very different from normal games, it focuses more on the sense of wonder players experience during the trip.

After releasing *Journey*, Chen said he was flooded with very emotional responses from players around the world. He recounted one veteran, disabled in combat, saying the game gave him hope and a desire to go out and live again.

Others used the game to deal with grieving and loss, he said. During *Journey*, players can be joined by another random online player, dressed in the same robe and hood. That player can help them along and communicate in limited ways, but their identity is completely anonymous. Chen said he received several letters from players dealing with the loss of a loved one where they had imagined that person was playing *Journey* with them. That projection helped them cope.

"I would never expected that, and wouldn't have believed it would happen if we didn't receive six or seven unrelated letters from around the world with very similar stories," Chen said.

"These games have more meaning than just pleasure, or just a moment of escape. There is more power in these games when you are doing it right. I think certain types of feelings can heal and change people, can make their lives better," Chen said. "Now we have refined our mission statement.

To make that experience perfect, and to make sure players get the optimal emotional experience, Chen's team relies on feedback during playtesting. *Journey*'s development took three years, he said, because the team had to change the design of the game to assure everyone got the same experience.

The online multiplayer element was the thing causing all the trouble. Since companionship is a big theme of the game, Chen needed to make sure players acted like the right type of companions online.

"For quite a while we had players being very mean to each other. People are really aggressive in many other games online. When the same player playing *Call of Duty* came over to *Journey*, we were expecting to reveal a positive side of humanity rather than a nasty side, but it didn't happen."

Part of the limited character interactions originally let characters physically touch each other with pushes or bumps. Players could even jump on each other's heads to reach higher obstacles. What happened was that playtesters would use that ability to shove other players, even going so far as to push other players in a pit so they would die, and the game "turned into people killing each other on a cliff."

"For a while we were disappointed in our playtesters, but then I realized our developers like to do it, too," Chen said. "The players aren't evil; the system just rewards that evil behavior."

Instead, Chen said players in a new game are basically babies. They come with a fresh moral slate and are just seeking feedback, similar to how an infant would. He explained an analogy a child psychologist had taught him, about a baby hitting the kitchen table with a spoon.

"The baby doesn't understand what it's doing; it wants feedback. If the baby is making noise and its parents run in to the room, it looks at that as positive feedback rather than negative. They like it more, so they will make it louder," Chen said. "Pushing off the cliff is maximum feedback, so we realized we had to redesign the system."

Chen will deliver his talk, titled "[Blank Canvas: Designing a New Era of Emotional Storytelling Through Games](#)" on April 24 at NYU's Skirball Center for Performing Arts as part of the Games for Change Festival. The talk is open to [festival ticket holders](#).

April 16, 2014

Impressions: 27,487,965

At Tribeca, movies are only part of the story



NEW YORK (AP) -- The Tribeca Film Festival is now a teenager. And like most teens, its eyes are on a lot of screens.

The 13th annual New York festival, which debuts Wednesday night, will present not just 80-plus feature films, but also an "Innovation Week" that seems designed to capture some of the tech energy of South by Southwest.

The festival will, for the second year, feature a category called Storyscapes, with transmedia exhibits that use multimedia techniques to tell stories. Video games, too, will be mixed in with the 11th annual Games for Change festival.

The addition of other forms of media, though, is also a way to open doors to new audiences. Geoff Gilmore, chief creative officer of Tribeca Enterprises, says festivals need to adapt to increasingly tech-savvy moviegoers.

"What is the new world of story for a new generation?" asks Gilmore. "We find it by showcasing work — including work that's transmedia, including work that's from the Web, including work that's gaming — but also in just different ways of thinking about it. That's the future of film festivals."



April 22, 2014

Impressions: 18,461,795

"Games For Change" Event - 2014 Tribeca Film...



NEW YORK, NY - APRIL 22: President of Games For Change Asi Burak attends the 11th annual Games For Change Festival at NYU Skirball Center on April 22, 2014 in New York City. (Photo by Ben Gabbe/Getty Images for the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival)



April 16, 2014

Impressions: 18,461,795

At Tribeca's New Innovation Week, the Future Is Now



With its newly launched [Innovation Week](#), the [Tribeca Film Festival](#) is calling on coders, gamers, hackers, directors, screenwriters, techies — and anyone with a story to tell.

The fest's latest addition features a series of discussions called Future of Film: The Story's Edge aimed at combining technology with storytelling. Tribeca's director of programming [Genna Terranova](#) says Innovation Week will provide a way of packaging more effectively a topic that's been on the fest's agenda for some time.

"The way that we framed it is new," Terranova says. "We have been doing these events for the last several years, but really felt we should bring (them) together so you can have a more fluid experience."

Innovation Week kicks off on April 21 with a conversation between writer-producer Aaron Sorkin and former presidential speech writer Jon Favreau, who will discuss the transition from an analog world to a digital one. Other discussions include Psychos We Love, featuring "Breaking Bad" star Bryan Cranston and "The Wolf of Wall Street" scribe Terrence Winter; and Stories by Numbers, with "House of Cards" screenwriter and showrunner Beau Willimon and "The Wire's" David Simon.

Games for Change, the largest gaming event in New York City that facilitates the creation and distribution of social impact games, will also join Tribeca for the first time to explore narratives and storytelling in gaming.

Taking a page from South by Southwest's exploding Interactive Fest, Tribeca's additions serve to combine the more traditional aspects of a film fest with the latest tech trends to reach a broader, perhaps younger, group.

"The importance of Innovation Week is to open up the conversation to a bunch of different audiences," Terranova says. "So somebody who might be really interested in technology and maybe more or less interested in film could find an entry point, and vice versa."

The New York Times

April 21, 2014

Impressions: 17,863,509

Not Just Playing Around Anymore

Games for Change Uses Video Games for Social Projects



A view of a section of Haiti as seen via the game Minecraft, left, and in an aerial photograph. UN-Habitat

This year, a United Nations program devoted to urban planning in countries affected by poverty or natural disasters began developing a sports field in the slums of Kibera, Kenya, designing it in the popular sandbox video game Minecraft. The game, which allows players to build entire worlds out of cubes in a 3-D environment, helped the project leaders create a visual representation of the field that could be easily understood by the neighborhood's residents.

"The game makes everything transparent," said Pontus Westerberg, a digital projects officer at the program, UN-Habitat. "It gives the communities we work with more agency and helps everyone see what's going on."

The project, known as [Block by Block](#), is among the highlights this week at the [Games for Change Festival](#) in New York, an annual event that promotes video games that seek social change. These efforts — known as serious games — once focused on education, to entice students to learn through digital play. But attention has shifted to more ambitious efforts like Block by Block, and a large part of that push has come from Games for Change, a nonprofit organization founded in 2004 that has worked with Google, NASA, the United Nations, the Rockefeller Foundation and TEDx.

Far removed from the military battles, zombie attacks and alien uprisings that dominate the multibillion-dollar video game industry, Games for Change is focused on lesser-known titles that treat the medium as something more than entertainment. The organization's festival has become a platform to introduce video games with altruistic goals.

This year's event, from Tuesday through Thursday, and again on Saturday, is being held with the [Tribeca Film Festival](#), a first-time partnership. While video games have had a presence at the film festival — Rockstar's L.A. Noire was shown to audiences there in 2011, as was Sony's Beyond: Two Souls in 2013 — this partnership represents a more formal integration of games and films, with Games for Change becoming an official part of the festival's Innovation Week.

Two projects have particularly helped Games for Change become a leading advocate for serious games: The first was [PeaceMaker](#), a simulation designed by a small team at Carnegie Mellon University in 2005. The game places players in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by asking them to make social, political and military decisions based on actual events.

The project was initiated by Asi Burak, the president of Games for Change, who once served as a captain in the Israel Defense Forces. Mr. Burak now lives in Manhattan with his wife and two daughters and credits his work on the game for helping him to earn legal United States residency.



Asi Burak, the president of Games for Change, in Manhattan. His nonprofit group supports video games with social agendas. Jennifer S. Altman for The New York Times

The second major undertaking was a collaboration between Games for Change and Half the Sky Movement, a global project based on the best-selling book "Half the Sky: Turning Oppression Into Opportunity for Women Worldwide," by the married team of Nicholas D. Kristof, a columnist for The New York Times, and Sheryl WuDunn, a former journalist at The Times. The project uses television, online and interactive media to raise awareness of women's issues. In 2012, PBS ran a mini-series on the movement, focusing on issues like sex trafficking and gender violence in Africa, India and Asia.

The [game component](#), Half the Sky Movement: The Game, was introduced on Facebook in 2013, giving players virtual tasks, like collecting books for young girls in Kenya, that can translate into tangible results. For instance, collecting 250,000 in-game books unlocks a donation of real books to Room to Read, a nonprofit organization focused on improving literacy and gender equality in developing countries. Players can also make donations to the game's nonprofit partners. The online-only game has since reached 1.25 million players, according to Games for Change.

One speaker at this year's festival is [Zoran Popovic](#), the director of the Center for Game Science at the University of Washington, in Seattle. He led the team of researchers responsible for the puzzle game Foldit, which sought to crowdsource a solution to a scientific problem. Foldit asked players to take on the role of a biochemist and map out how proteins might be folded in nature. The game provided scores based on how well they performed. Three papers in the journal Nature have been published, based on Foldit discoveries, since the game's release in 2008; [the most famous](#), in 2011, explained how Foldit players had helped to decipher the structure of an AIDS-related enzyme, a problem that scientists had been trying to solve for years.

Mr. Popovic plans to unveil a new project this week, a synthetic-biology game called NanoCrafter, whose goal is to discover molecular structures that could benefit vaccine and cancer research.

For Mr. Burak, the future of serious gaming depends on two things: persuading top designers to work for Games for Change and putting social-impact games into the hands of everyday players.

“Gaming is social, participatory and has learning at its core,” Mr. Burak said. “These are powerful things for social impact, and it makes sense for us to take full advantage of it.”

January 22, 2014

Impressions: 17,863,509



Bigger Role for Video Games Is Planned at Tribeca Film Festival

By **LAURA PARKER**

JANUARY 22, 2014, 2:14 PM 1 Comments

The annual [Games for Change](#) festival, which promotes the development and distribution of video games with an educational or social-minded focus, will partner with the 2014 [Tribeca Film Festival](#), the [organizers announced](#) this week. While video games have had a presence at the film festival — Rockstar’s “[L.A. Noire](#)” was featured in 2011, and Sony’s “[Beyond: Two Souls](#)” was included in 2013 — this partnership represents a more formal integration of games and films.

Craig Hatkoff, a founder of the film festival, said the collaboration would allow audiences, filmmakers and industry executives to interact with a new form of storytelling.

“Gaming has infused every aspect of culture,” Mr. Hatkoff said in a phone interview. “People are clamoring for more ways to tell stories, be it a two-hour film, a six-second video or a video game.”

Of particular interest to Tribeca Film Festival officials was the idea that gaming had grown beyond entertainment. Since it was founded in 2004, Games for Change has helped create and promote games with a goal of improving society. Its annual festival is now the largest gaming event in New York; past speakers have included Al Gore and Sandra Day O’Connor.

“The conversation about games could be much more sophisticated and nuanced than it is now,” [Asi Burak](#), the president of Games for Change, said by phone. “We want Games for Change to help prove that games have a wide appeal. We’ve done a lot with stakeholders, with funding — we even got into the White House. But the idea that everyday people will have a chance to see what we do is a big step forward.”

Mr. Hatkoff said that the partnership would serve as a test for establishing a continuing relationship. And Mr. Burak said he hoped this would help change public opinions about the role of video games, specifically [gaming's cultural importance](#).

“If I ask regular folks what educational games are, they don’t know,” Mr. Burak said. “For them, video games are just the big, blockbuster titles they see advertised. I want to change that — I want people to think about games having the same diversity as any other medium.”

This year’s Games for Change festival is to take place April 22 through 24 at the New York University’s Skirball Center for the Performing Arts as part of the Tribeca Film Festival. Guest speakers, game demonstrations, networking events and an awards ceremony will be featured. In addition, Games for Change will have a presence at the film festival’s Family Festival Street Fair on April 26, when members of the public will be invited to play games highlighted during this year’s event.

The 2014 Tribeca Film Festival is scheduled for April 16 through 27 and is expected to feature around 90 feature films and 60 shorts.



April 26, 2014

Impressions: 17,679,077

Let's Get Serious About Video Games

The 11th Annual Games For Change festival took place in New York City as part of the Tribeca Film Festival.

Games For Change is a different kind of video game festival, one where video games that aim to implement social change take center stage. So-called “serious games” and “social impact games” are the focus of the festival.

Of course, I’ve often thought that the language we use to categorize games is problematic. After all, we should be serious in our consideration of all video games. They all have social impact. We don’t consider non-fiction books to be serious while lumping fiction into a category called “commercial.” We recognize that most film and television media has social impact regardless of its intention. Why are we so confused about video games? I don’t have the answer. Let me know if you do.

Each year, I go to Games For Change because it is the place where game developers that are truly pushing the boundaries of video games showcase their work. At the festival, we see games that reimagine the act of gaming—what can it do? What can it mean? We see games that think critically about learning, teaching, playing, and storytelling.

This year’s big award winner was Lucas Pope’s “[Papers Please](#),” a game that also ranked first in [Forbes’ Top 5 Indie Games of 2013](#).

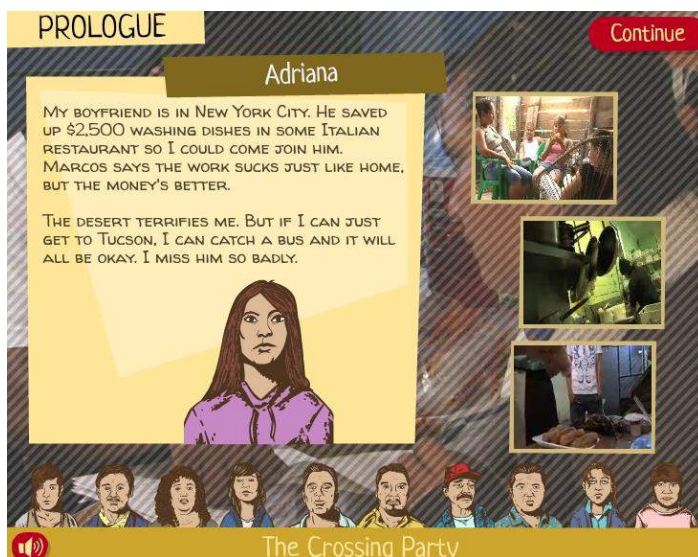


I won’t write much about it, as it has already been covered (click the links if you want details).

Basically, it is a game that forces players to think about the realities of border control, the dangers of power, and the way our individual guesses can have huge impact on other people's lives. You play as an immigration inspector tasked with controlling the flow of immigrants. There are smugglers, spies, terrorists, and tourists. Can you distinguish? Who gets in? Who's turned away?

Immigration is a hot issue. Another game featured at the festival was "The Migrant Trail." The game's developers describe it this way:

"THE MIGRANT TRAIL presents a first-person journey through Arizona's desert borderlands. Play as an undocumented immigrant attempting to cross the Arizona desert and/or a border patrol agent attempting to secure the border. "



Unlike "Papers Please," which centers around bureaucracy and security, "The Migrant Trail" is about survival. It makes us aware of just how high the stakes are along the U.S. border.

"Every year an unknown number of migrants cross through the harsh Sonoran desert from Mexico into Arizona. They pay \$1500-\$2500 to join a crossing party, that is led by for hire guides referred to as Coyotes. If one cannot keep up, twists

ankle or runs out of water, he or she is left behind and many die. On average, the remains of 200 dead migrants are found each year. It's not known how many are never found."

"The Migrant Trail" is free to play [here](#). You can take the role of either migrant or border patrol. One of my favorite award winners was "Mission US: Cheyenne Odyssey," developed by THIRTEEN, American Social History Project, and Electric Funstuff. It won the award for the "Most Significant Impact" award.

The game, which you can play for free [here](#), is described as an interactive way to learn history. Designed for students grades 5-8, the game immerses students in a historic context.

If you follow me on Forbes, you know that I write a lot about educational games. I cover the way games can be used in a classroom setting. Most of those games are plagued by a kind of mechanical

understanding of learning. That is, they imagine the game as a tool that will somehow insert knowledge into learners, or as something which makes retention more efficient. Knowledge, wisdom, and educational are mistakenly understood as the process of distributing facts and content.

“Mission US: Cheyenne Odyssey” is different. It brings history to life. No, it is not particularly realistic. It plays like a smart, modern version of the “Choose Your Own Adventure” novels that I loved as a kid. I say it brings history to life because it focuses on the real, everyday decisions that one Cheyenne boy, Little Fox, has to make.

It is exciting to me to imagine students learning history in such a way that they see how immediate decisions have impact not only on individual survival, but also on the trajectory of a collective future.

As always, Games For Change was full of thoughtful programming and great gameplay. “We are thrilled to see such expressive and high-quality games from both commercial and independent developers,” said Games for Change, President Asi Burak. “By combining their passions and undeniable talent, these developers have succeeded not just financially, but also in presenting thought-provoking gameplay with real-world impact.”

Parents, if you have kids that are old enough to get the themes in these games, playing together is a great way to start a conversation.

For a list of all the games featured at Games For Change, visit <http://www.gamesforchange.org/play/>






January 21, 2014

Impressions: 17,679,077

Tribeca Film Festival To Explore The Transformative Potential Of Video Games

Games for Change will host their 11th annual festival “as part of the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival, presented by AT&T  +0.97%. In addition, the Games for Change Arcade, which is open to the public, will be held at the Tribeca Film Festival Family Festival Street Fair, taking place on Saturday, April 26.” The festival, which focuses on social impact games will take place on April 22-24, 2014 at the NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts.



Games for Change is New York City’s largest gaming event.

The Tribeca Film Festival is extremely well known thanks to the involvement of Robert De Niro, who founded the festival along with Jane Rosenthal and Craig Hatkoff “in 2001 following the attacks on the World Trade Center, to spur the economic and

cultural revitalization of the lower Manhattan district through an annual celebration of film, music and culture.”

The Tribeca Film Festival aims to bring “industry and community together around storytelling.” With the inclusion of Games For Change, the festival is implicitly acknowledging that the future of storytelling involves interactive mediums.

“Tribeca recognizes the transformative power of gaming that goes far beyond the traditional entertainment value of games. The impact and integration has been spreading rapidly across virtually all domains. Of particular interest is how gaming has scaled to social good, from education to healthcare, and from conflict resolution to religion,” said Craig Hatkoff, Co-Founder, TFF. He continued: “By partnering with Games for Change, we hope to bring together the most cutting-edge creators of games, educators, and the world’s greatest story-tellers. Together, they will create the latest innovations in

gaming for the social good to even wider audiences. We look forward to further expanding our relationship with Games for Change in the future.”

“The new relationship with the Tribeca Film Festival is an incredible opportunity to reach a new audience for the ‘games for good’ sector,” said Asi Burak, President of Games for Change. “Games are often discussed in the context of entertainment, but with this event, we’ll be able to share our message that this medium can be very powerful in creating positive change in the world.”

I regularly attend Games for Change and I always find it thought provoking. Unlike ordinary commercial conferences that aim to promote, market, and sell new games, Games For Change is interested in exploring the expressive and transformative potential of gaming.

Although the commercial gaming sector dominates the industry, there are a plethora of developers who see games as capable of more than just entertainment. They acknowledge that video games are always teaching and influencing those who play them, and therefore, we should strive to intentionally harness their power for social impact. For this reason, the Games For Change Festival is always full of impressive uses of interactive storytelling. Those who attend see examples of how games can be political, educational, emotional, and more.

Program highlights from this year’s Games For Change festival will include: the Annual Games for Change Awards, the Games for Change Showcase at the NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts, as well as the Games for Change Arcade (open to the public).

If you plan to attend, hit me up on twitter and say hello while you’re there.

For more info about the festival click here: <http://www.gamesforchange.org/>



April 21, 2014

Impressions: 17,244,084

11 years on, Games For Change festival maturing

When the 11th annual Games For Change Festival opens on Tuesday in New York City, more than 800 people are expected to attend, plus another 10,000 tuning in via a live-streaming connection. When the festival opens its free outdoor "Family Day" on Saturday in conjunction with the Tribeca Film Festival, upwards of 300,000 people are expected.

It's hard not to notice how big, and perhaps how mainstream, the little event has become. Originally held in June 2004 at the New York Academy of Sciences, it was an earnest attempt to figure out how video games could become tools for education, health and social change. Organizers of that first half-day event could easily count the number of attendees: 42.

"It was almost a retreat setting," says co-founder Benjamin Stokes. "It was really intimate."

Since then, of course, video games in general and "serious games" in particular have seeped into public consciousness, thanks in no small part to devices like the iPhone and iPad, as well as social networking tools like Facebook.

Even casual gamers find themselves playing "brain-training" games while waiting in line at the bank. Since 2013, more than 1.2 million people have played the Facebook game based on the 2009 book *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*.

It's a big change for a conference — and an industry — with "very, very modest beginnings," says Games For Change President Asi Burak, who is also executive producer of the *Half the Sky* game.

Since 2004, the conference has pushed at the limits of what's possible in a video game, helping bring the field into the mainstream. Recent keynote speakers have included retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who in 2008 oversaw development of the popular *iCivics* games, and former Vice President Al Gore, who in 2011 told festival attendees, "Games are the new norm."

That was a key moment, says festival co-founder Barry Joseph. "He never apologized once, during his entire talk, for games," says Joseph. "The fact that he didn't feel he needed to do that meant to me that there had been a significant shift."

Stokes agrees. After the O'Connor and Gore appearances, he remembers, "Suddenly you can speak to mainstream journalists and they can have some kind of anchor" to understand the industry.

Part of the shift is demographic. According to the Entertainment Software Association (ESA), the industry's lobbying group, the average gamer is now 31 years old and nearly as likely to be female as male. About two-thirds of parents now say gaming "provides mental stimulation or education," according to ESA, a breathtaking change of fortune for an industry that just nine years ago earned the wrath of then-Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton. In 2005, she complained that games like *Grand Theft Autowere* "stealing the innocence of our children and ... making the difficult job of being a parent even harder."

But gamers are now voters. The generation that grew up on *Super Mario Bros.* is now raising kids and teaching in our schools. There's even a bipartisan Congressional Gaming Caucus — its self-described mission is "to educate and inform Members of Congress on the legislative and regulatory issues facing the gaming industry and its employees."

Among the three games up for a "most significant impact" award this week at the festival is one is sponsored by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Mainstream video game publishers have noticed the shift. In 2012, gaming behemoth Electronic Arts entered into a partnership with the educational publisher Pearson, the New York-based nonprofit Institute of Play, ESA and the Educational Testing Service to create the research and game-design developer GlassLab. Last November, it released an educational version of the popular world-building game *SimCity*, and on Tuesday it's expected to launch *Mars Generation One: Argubot Academy*, a new tablet-based English language arts game developed in collaboration with NASA.

"This industry is really starting to grow up," says Jessica Lindl, GlassLab's general manager. "There's a lot of maturing happening."

Actually, she says, the biggest challenge facing the industry is not so much how to develop innovative games as how to get them into the hands of teachers and kids. Of the estimated \$2 billion market for learning games, fewer than one in five games ends up in a classroom, creating a "major inequity problem" for kids who don't have access to computers or smartphones at home, Lindl says.

As big as it has become, the festival thankfully never takes itself too seriously. One of its most enduring features is an ongoing, "very public debate" on the value of games, says Joseph. It's constantly pushing participants to question whether the idea of "games for change" even makes sense. In 2013, Georgia Tech professor and game designer Ian Bogost quipped during his keynote, "I have to admit, and maybe this is just me, but when people start talking about changing the world, I check to see if I still have my wallet."

He delivered perhaps the most well-received comment from the festival's main stage, saying only half-jokingly that "serious games" might be worth thinking about if we talked about video games the way we talk about cheesecake.

"When you say, 'Dude, that was a *serious* cheesecake,' in that case, 'serious' means two things," he said.

"There is a kind of care and an attention to detail, and there's this desire and realization of a thing's fundamental structure. 'This is the apotheosis of cheesecake. You have realized it.'"

Festival website: <http://gamesforchange.org/festival/>



January 21, 2014

Impressions: 17,244,084

"Games for Change" festival to be part of Tribeca Film Festival

In the clearest indication yet that video games are growing well beyond their roots as amusements built on coin boxes and hand-eye coordination, the 11th annual Games for Change (G4C) Festival this spring will take place as part of the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival, where it will host a family-friendly gaming arcade in lower Manhattan.

"For me it's a huge leap because it means that for the first time we're bringing Games for Change ... to the real person on the street," says Asi Burak, the games festival's president.

G4C is perhaps the biggest player in the growing "serious games" movement, which uses digital games and simulations for health, education, training and social change, among other uses. The festival last year produced *Half The Sky Movement: The Game*, a Facebook game based on *Half the Sky*, the 2009 book by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn about the worldwide oppression of women.

Craig Hatkoff, co-founder of the film festival, says Tribeca is paying attention to "the transformative power of gaming" that goes beyond traditional entertainment. He wants the combined event to bring together "the most cutting-edge creators of games, educators, and the world's greatest story-tellers." Hatkoff, along with his wife, the film producer Jane Rosenthal, and Robert DeNiro, founded the film festival in 2001, after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, to promote economic revitalization in lower Manhattan.

According to the Electronic Software Association, the video game industry's lobbying organization, consumers in 2012 spent nearly \$21 billion on video games, hardware and accessories; 58% of Americans play video games and nearly half of gamers are women. The typical gamer is now 30 years old.

"The more I go on the subway, the more I see people playing games," says Burak. Yet many of those players still tell him, "Oh, I'm not a gamer," despite the fact that more than one in three Americans plays games on their smartphone. "To me it's one of those things that one day will change," he says.



(Photo: Games For Change)

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Games for Change, Tribeca festivals brings together game designers, educators and "the world's greatest story-tellers"
- "Serious games" movement focuses on health, education, training and social change
- Burak: "The more I go on the subway, the more I see people playing games."

Burak hopes the growth in the medium's popularity leads people "to start discussing it like you would discuss TV or any other medium."

G4C takes place April 22 to 24 at New York University's Skirball Center for the Performing Arts. The Tribeca Family Festival Street Fair, which will include the G4C Arcade, takes place April 26, over several blocks in Manhattan's Tribeca neighborhood.



April 16, 2014

Impressions: 15,247,901

At Tribeca, movies are only part of the story

NEW YORK (AP) -- The Tribeca Film Festival is now a teenager. And like most teens, its eyes are on a lot of screens.

The 13th annual New York festival, which debuts Wednesday night, will present not just 80-plus feature films, but also an "Innovation Week" that seems designed to capture some of the tech energy of South by Southwest.

The festival will, for the second year, feature a category called Storyscapes, with transmedia exhibits that use multimedia techniques to tell stories. Video games, too, will be mixed in with the 11th annual Games for Change festival.

The addition of other forms of media, though, is also a way to open doors to new audiences. Geoff Gilmore, chief creative officer of Tribeca Enterprises, says festivals need to adapt to increasingly tech-savvy moviegoers.

"What is the new world of story for a new generation?" asks Gilmore. "We find it by showcasing work — including work that's transmedia, including work that's from the Web, including work that's gaming — but also in just different ways of thinking about it. That's the future of film festivals."



April 29, 2014

Impressions: 10,673,411

Interview: Jenova Chen on Games For Change, Storytelling, and more



The 11th annual Games For Change Festival was headlined by renowned game designer [Jenova Chen](#), head of the award-winning thatgamecompany. During his keynote, Chen spoke about the purpose of gaming being an exchange of emotions, not numbers. With regards to the popular games of today that look to have a social aspect, Chen spoke of how he strived to create something different, where players could have an emotional connection without large explosions and grisly murders.

Speaking of [Journey](#), Chen mentioned that the original reaction of players when they met was to cause harm to each other, leaving their morals in the real world. He had an opportunity to speak with a mental health professional who advised him that when entering a virtual world, the majority of people remove their moral compass. When tasked with trying to find an alternative, Chen came up with the positive reactions that led to many awards for Journey.

With works that have won numerous awards and been featured in places such as the Museum of Modern Art and the Smithsonian, Chen's work is recognized as a change for good and a positive mark in an industry that can often get lost in the explosions that largely embody it. Chen, and Games For Change, look to continue that positive reinforcement for years to come.



April 25, 2014

Impressions: 10,673,411

Games for Change president on going 'beyond the gaming industry'

For the first time since its birth 11 years ago, the Games for Change Festival was held as part of this year's [Tribeca Film Festival](#), which, according to the organization's president, Asi Burak, is what encouraged G4C to invite a diverse lineup of keynote speakers, ones that go "beyond the gaming industry."



"Because of the partnership with Tribeca we've invited speakers that are beyond the gaming industry," Burak told Examiner. "So this year there's a range of speakers that are coming from science, from medicine, from brain research. A lot of places that are using game thinking but they're not necessarily game makers. So I think that the partnership with Tribeca kind of opened our eyes to say, 'oh wait, this is a conversation that is beyond making games, it's a conversation about how games are now a part of our life, from every aspect.' Top researchers in the world are using games to advance the solutions to problems they couldn't solve in any other way, so that's a conversation that is new to the festival."

"I think on the side of Tribeca, I think that the innovation week idea, until now Tribeca, the brand is Tribeca Film Festival, but it's for the first time in a big way they're saying, 'no, we have much more than that, we have content that is about technology and innovation, the future of film.' It brings people from different perspectives: hackers, gamers, innovators, filmmakers, it's a very kind of proud innovation that wasn't there before in such a big way."

A few memorable speakers from this week's events were award-winning game designer and New York Times' bestselling author Jane McGonigal, who visually described what she felt the games of 2024 would be like; Digital Projects Officer at UN-Habitat, Pontus Westerberg, who explained how *Minecraft* is helping to revolutionize building projects; and Lead Game Designer at GlassLab Erin Hoffman, who discussed how their studio provides a model to accelerate the research and development as well as distribution of educational games.

Tomorrow G4C will hold a public day, featuring a public arcade, life-sized bubbles in a bubble garden and ESPN activities as well as live music and more.

The Games for Change Festival was held from April 22-24.



February 15, 2014

Impressions: 10,673,411

The cultural excitement of Tribeca Film Festival

New Yorkers are eagerly looking forward to the cultural event of the year. [Tribeca Film Festival](#) is not only a reminder of the cultural richness of the New York City area, but also serves as a sign beckoning the arrival of springtime.

This year the [Tribeca Film Festival](#) kicks off on April 16th and continues through April 27, 2014. It is presented by the corporate giant of the technology world, [AT&T](#). Although the festival is celebrating 13 glorious years, 2014 marks the beginning of something new and exciting. [Tribeca Innovation Week](#) is being introduced to give innovators and creative leaders a chance to participate in events and storytelling in the Digital Age. We are jumping ahead to a future filled with change. [Culture](#) and technology come together to take us into a brand new realm of existence. This new portion of the festival takes place from April 21-April 26, 2014 and welcomes coders, screenwriters, hackers, futurists, gamers, directors, engineers, venture capitalists, [film](#) financiers, techno-radicals, those with a curiosity, and anyone who has a story to tell.

"[Tribeca Innovation Week](#) will bring together the ever merging communities - creators and innovators - to explore this unique time of convergence in media, movies, art and technology. As the digital and analog worlds continue to blur there has never been more of an opportunity to create and tell stories." said Jane Rosenthal, [TFF](#) Co-Founder and CEO.

Encompassing technology, art and culture, the Fifth Annual **Tribeca Disruptive Innovation Awards** (TDIA) will also be part of the groundbreaking week. The 'Future of Film Live' panel series will bring an informative edge to the week. Film fanatics can also look forward to a showcase of transmedia projects, a two-day hackathon sponsored by [AT&T](#) that unites technologists and content creators; the daylong **TFI** Interactive summit, an initiative of the nonprofit **Tribeca Film Institute** with leadership support from the **Ford Foundation**; and the **Games for Change Festival**, in its first installment as part of the [Tribeca Film Festival](#).

The 11th Annual **Games for Change Festival** (April 22-24, 26th) is the largest gaming event to take place in New York City, bringing a whole new magic to the [Tribeca Film Festival](#).



March 13, 2014

Impressions: 8,950,977

2014 Games for Change Festival's Public Arcade

Visit the G4C Arcade at the Tribeca Family Street Fair on Saturday April 26 from 10am to 6pm, located on Jay Street between Greenwich & Hudson streets. Open to Festival registrants and the public. Digital games from leading game makers, live games to play from the game masters of Come Out & Play and the innovative Quest to Learn public school, and tents full of fun and discovery from: American Museum of Natural History BrainQuake Co.lab FarmVille Glasslab Global Gaming Initiative Institute of Play Kidaptive Quest to Learn Schell Games Timbuktu TinyTap Zynga.org.
Admission: Free





May 1, 2014

Impressions: 3,694,598

Surprise! Your *FarmVille* Games Have Helped Raise Millions for Charity



Online games do nothing but rot our brains, waste our time, and force us to spend money on frivolous things that only feed our addictions. Right?

Not according to Ken Weber, executive director of Zynga.org, the charitable arm of the company behind such online games as *FarmVille* and *CityVille*. Since it launched in 2009, this little-known operation has used *FarmVille* and other games to raise money in support of charitable causes. Inside these sweeping virtual worlds, when players buy certain virtual goods and other perks, the proceeds go to charity. Buy some corn in *FarmVille*, for instance, and it could fund earthquake relief efforts in Haiti. That may sound like an odd thing, but as it turns out, it's a wonderfully effective way of doing good.

To date, Zynga.org has raised some \$17 million, and this year, it's poised to cross the \$20 million mark.

When players buy certain virtual goods and other perks, the proceeds go to charity. Buy some corn in *FarmVille*, and it could fund earthquake relief efforts in Haiti

In recent years, Zynga hasn't exactly been a fount of good news. Since the San Francisco-based gaming company's weak IPO back in 2011, its market share has waned, revenue has shrunk, and management has been forced to [lay off staff](#) by the hundreds. Last week, news came that founder Mark Pincus, who was replaced as CEO by Microsoft veteran Don Mattrick last year, was [stepping down](#) from his day-to-day duties at the company altogether. And yet, as Zynga has floundered, Zynga.org has flourished. Last month, it hit a major milestone, [raising \\$1 million for Water.org](#), a Kansas City, Missouri-based charity that funds clean water projects in the developing world. Meanwhile, Zynga.org has partnered with New Schools Venture Fund, a venture philanthropy firm focused on innovation in education, to launch an incubator for educational gaming startups called co.lab.

All of this has made Zynga an early frontrunner in the emerging "games for good" space, but it's certainly not the only major gaming company jumping on this growing trend. Last year, Electronic Arts launched SimCityEDU, a tool for teachers that turns student assessment into a game. Rovio, the company behind *Angry Birds*, has also developed a game-based kindergarten curriculum called *Angry Birds Playground*, which it's already rolling out to students in China. Other companies, like Blizzard Entertainment, have run charitable campaigns in games like *World of Warcraft*, where players donated to the Make-A-Wish Foundation by purchasing an in-game pet.

The New Altruism

For some of these companies, the shift toward gaming for good is as much about business strategy as altruism. School systems and local governments could potentially pay them for this kind of work, and that's an important thing. Given the fickle tastes of the consumer gaming industry, it's no wonder these gaming companies would look for new sources revenue. "These companies realize there's a business opportunity in education in the future," says Asi Burak, president of the non-profit Games for Change, which held its 11th annual festival in New York City last week. "They're determined to have their finger on the pulse and know when to move in."

But Zynga.org is a non-profit, and it takes a more holistic approach to gaming for good. While the company works on developing educational games — and takes a stake in co.lab's portfolio companies — it's also proving that games like *FarmVille* can be an effective fundraising vehicle for charities. This was first shown back in 2009 when a group of Zynga employees, led by Mark Pincus's sister Laura Pincus Hartman, launched a campaign called Sweet Seeds for Haiti in *FarmVille*.

If players purchased a packet of seeds in the game, Zynga automatically donated that money to organizations working in Haiti. All told, the campaign raised \$1 million. When Haiti's catastrophic earthquake hit the following year, the team launched yet another campaign, which raised nearly \$3 million from some 500,000 players in just a few weeks. "It was an immediate success for the people in the studio," says Weber, who joined Zynga.org in 2011 after working as COO at The ONE Campaign, a poverty-fighting charity. "It also showed that players were really responsive to this content. They wanted it."

'Fertile Ground'

Zynga.org became an independent 501(c)3 in 2012, and it has run more than 125 campaigns with 50 different non-profits, from Heifer International to the World Food Programme and Water.org. "For

organizations dealing with food, water, hunger, and sustainability, *FarmVille* is, pardon the pun, fertile ground,” says Weber.

It also delivers huge returns to these partner charities. Without paying Zynga a dime, they get to work with the company’s in-house engineers and designers to create a campaign, and receive 100 percent of the donations at the end of it. “By almost any measure, this has been the most successful cost-to-dollar-raised campaign we’ve ever had,” says Mike McCamon, Water.org’s director of technology.

Weber doesn’t deny that Zynga’s troubles over the years have affected the charity that shares its name. “We want to scale our social impact, and the scale of Zynga has had a direct impact on how much we can scale that social impact,” he says.

‘By almost any measure, this has been the most successful cost-to-dollar-raised campaign we’ve ever had.’

And yet, he says the biggest challenge the non-profit has faced has been working around the fact that neither Apple nor Facebook allow in-app donations on their platforms. Weber says he’s working to “crack the nut with Apple,” and encourage the tech giant to loosen its restrictions. Though there are legal ways to skirt these policies, like text-to-give campaigns, these restrictions are a major barrier for charities looking to capitalize on this new fundraising model, says Burak. “Some great work is being done, but it’s still early,” he says. “We’re still struggling with policies, public perception, and consumer education.”

However far Zynga has fallen, the company still has a market cap of nearly \$3.4 billion and reported \$168 million in revenue during the first quarter of this year. Some even say it’s headed for a comeback. That may be one reason why the \$2 million to \$3 million Zynga.org brings in each year is a negligible loss compared to the halo effect this work brings the company and the rest of the gaming industry. “If we want to be a company that’s a forever brand, it’s important that people want to be part of what we offer,” Weber says. “We want to be part of the argument that destigmatizes games



April 12, 2014

Impressions: 6,398,814

The Next Big Thing In Video Games: 'Ethical' Gaming

A decade ago Asi Burak developed a video game designed to encourage opposing parties in the Israel-Palestine dispute over land to better understand – even empathise – with each others' point of view. That conflict may be no closer to a resolution, but the concept that interactive games can be used for more than mere entertainment, even as a tool for positive change, is looking like the next big thing in online gaming.

Next week, Burak's 11th annual [Games for Change Festival](#) will join forces with New York's prestigious [Tribeca Film Festival](#) in an effort to give video games greater recognition and counter the stereotype that this £39bn global industry can specialise only in war games, urban chaos and medieval fantasy.

"People understand that games are powerful, but they're also scared of this power," says Burak. "We need to change the perception that all games are shallow, violent and childish, because they are not."

Statistics show that gaming has outgrown its reputation as an activity for children and teenagers. The average age of players is now 30, 10 years older than it was a decade ago.

There are games for women in their 30s, and games for seniors to combat declines in mental function.

Collectively, the world now spends one billion hours every day playing video games – up more than 50% in three years. Meanwhile, the average young person racks up 10,000 hours playing video games by the age of 21, only slightly less than the time they spend in secondary education.

"People see the negative side and they talk about addiction, but there are many games on the positive side," says Burak. Games such as *Minecraft*, he adds, are "amazingly creative experiences and far more engaging than watching TV".



The festival will bring together leading software developers and thinkers on the subject, including Jenova Chen, co-founder of thatgamecompany and creator of the games *Journey* and *Flower*, and Jane McGonigal, the author of *Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World*. McGonigal's thesis is that games can effect change in problems ranging from depression and obesity to global issues such as poverty and climate change.

Many of the new studies claim a wide variety of benefits from gaming, including improved attention, higher creativity and improved ability to manage difficult emotions, such as fear and anger.

McGonigal, co-founder of the health improvement game *SuperBetter*, believes technological advances in [virtual reality](#) will enhance the power of gaming for good. To encourage a change in behaviour, she says, you need more than a video or a pamphlet. "Gaming does seem to be persuasive in changing people's thoughts, attitudes, feelings and actions in a way other mediums cannot."

The author points to a virtual reality game developed at Georgia University that places the player in the sights and sounds of computerised woodland and gives them a virtual chainsaw. They are then required to cut down a tree using a vibrating controller. After the tree falls, the forest goes quiet and birds stop chirping.

"Just two minutes changed people's real-world environmental behaviour for an entire week," says McGonigal. "They used 25% less [paper](#) products." People who simply watched a video of trees being cut down did not change their behaviour.

"The visceral immersive experience seemed to make a difference," she says. "People seemed to understand the loss of the tree as the loss of a living thing."

A separate study at Stanford University's Virtual Human Interaction Lab simulated disabilities such as colour blindness. Researchers found that people who experienced blindness not only expressed more empathy but contributed time to volunteer efforts.

The focus on virtual reality in gaming comes as the [technology companies](#) begin to invest heavily in the sector. Last month Facebook acquired the virtual-reality goggles maker Oculus for \$2bn, giving a huge potential boost to a technology designed to produce the sensation of not just looking into a virtual-reality world, but actually being an integral part of it.

In announcing the purchase, [Facebook's](#) CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, touted virtual reality as the next big computing platform after mobile.

McGonigal identifies several companies, including Valve, the developer of the popular VR platform Steam, Minecraft and Zynga as companies committed to creating positive experiences. She hopes Facebook will hire thoughtful designers who will be able to connect us to reality, rather than disconnect us from it.

"Who can we have empathy for? What can we have empathy for? And how do we rally the gaming community?"

Chen says the games he grew up with in the 1990s helped him to become self-aware and ultimately a better person. At his company, he says, developers aspire to create interactive entertainment that can touch hearts. *Flower* was recently accepted into the Smithsonian American Art Museum's permanent collection.

Chen says he's optimistic about the field of positive game development. "We have a huge video game audience today, but still a rather biased portfolio when it comes to the types of emotions they create and its social impact.

"Today's game creators are changing that. I believe we will see more and more positive games coming into existence soon."

The technology poses as many questions as it answers. If virtual-reality games connect us to the real world, what does that say about our lack of connection? Are video games a source of "real" happiness? Do the positive emotions contribute to real wellbeing, or are these feelings also virtual?

Philosopher Bernard Suits claims that, if we ever create a perfect society, games will be the only reason to go on living. We would have to play, or else have no purpose in our lives, Suits argues, because they can bring a sense of service and collective meaning.

Like real-world reality, there is no single virtual reality, says Burak. It's an open debate. Some want to use virtual reality for behavioural change; some to make political statements. "The festival, he says, "is about the idea that the platform is attractive to anyone interested in social issues."

But, speaking personally, he adds: "I would like to see more design purpose and effort going toward creating empathy."



April 25, 2014

Impressions: 6,195,113

5 Things Documentary Filmmakers Can Learn from Game Designers



The Virtual Peace Village: A scene from Minecraft collaboratively created by students from Israel, Palestine, Jordan, and Egypt participating in Games for Peace.

Digital game designers have taken many notes from the pages of filmmaking history when it comes to character and story development. However, filmmakers can learn a thing or two from game aficionados as well, especially when it comes to audience development. After all, games live or die by their ability to connect and engage with players. Clearly the [Tribeca Film Institute](#) thinks that there is crossover between filmmaking and gaming, as they have now partnered with [Games for Change](#) to have their annual conference take place alongside the Tribeca Film Festival in its [Innovation Week](#).

Here's what I picked up from a week of Games for Change panels:

1. Know Your Audience

In discussing the development of games for pre-schoolers, Jesse Schell of [Schell Games](#) said that he constantly reminds his team, "You are not three." That means that they spend a lot of time putting their in-the-works projects in front of actual three-year-olds to gauge response and iterate accordingly. Filmmakers might fear that incorporating this idea into their process could compromise their artistic vision, but documentaries frequently have a social goal, so perhaps it's time to embrace what resonates with audiences while we're still making our films.

Deborah S. Levine of Planned Parenthood worked on a series of [games to address teen pregnancy](#), and backed up every production decision with scientific research about her audience. Levine told the Games

for Change audience, “To encourage offline behavior, you need to understand theoretical framework for behaviors. Understand what works in real world.” In other words, if you want your film to motivate an audience to act, find out what else motivates them and address or incorporate it directly.

2. Personal Interaction Still Matters

Uri Mishol co-founded [Games for Peace](#) to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict when he realized one thing that the two societies have in common — their kids play video games. Thus, he and his team began to modify Minecraft — the mega-popular, multi-player, communication-based computer game — to suit multi-lingual Arab and Jewish players. One of their projects has 8th grade classes — one from an Arab school and one from a Jewish school — meet weekly in a virtual Minecraft game world. But the deal is sealed when the students meet face to face after six online encounters. It’s these real world meetings that reinforce the relationships formed online and ultimately create real change.

Documentary filmmakers have long-embraced this concept with community screenings and house parties, but this presentation led me to ponder how can we push it further. How can we plan for live elements that work alongside our storyworlds from the earliest development stages?

3. Invite Your Audiences to Participate

Games have always been about audience participation, but levels of audience engagement are growing exponentially as players can now modify, build and expand upon the games themselves. In games like [Minecraft](#), part of the “play” is game creation. Games for Change offered several great examples of this, like the teen presenter known by her online avatar “Snowkitty” who created a game within the Minecraft framework to encourage other kids to recycle. Imagine if documentaries could activate audiences this way!

And this participation doesn’t have to be digital. As game designer Peter Vigeant reminded us, “Everything digital has roots in the analog world. Use best practices.” He pointed to a technique used by Karl Rohnke, an experiential education pioneer. Rohnke would challenge reluctant groups to participate in live games, such as a ropes course, and would pique their curiosity with something small or silly before getting to the larger task at hand. Vigeant explained, “It’s an invitation to participate. Once a group is hooked, they’re in. It’s not just about participation, but co-facilitation. The group makes the outcome.” The group takes the game and makes it theirs.

Documentary filmmakers have an increasing number of ways to employ this strategy and turn viewers into participants, whether by including interactive elements in the films, by crowdsourcing or releasing media to an audience for remixing, to name a few.

4. Reinforce Your Message

Filmmakers have no shortage of vision, but I was impressed by the extent to which the game designers’ social goals seemed to permeate every decision that they made, rather than getting lost in an artistic haze along the way. Angela Santomero, who has an incredible track record in children’s television, starting with the creation of Blue’s Clues in the 90’s, is now executive producer of “Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood,” the “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood” spinoff for preschoolers on PBS. The show and its

associated [digital learning games](#) are designed as a contemporary legacy to the lessons taught by Mister Rogers since the late 60's.

In ensuring that their learning goals are met, Santomero shared, “We carefully script and model strategies for socio-emotional skills that kids can repeat in real world. Every half-hour is based on a strategy. They hear it multiple times in multiple ways in multiple contexts.” And these same strategies are reinforced in the digital games.

Granted, most documentary film audiences are not small children, and do not want to be preached to or hit over the head with a message. However, there is something to be said for a certain kind of repetition or reinforcement. Think about how many times audiences play video games compared with how many times they watch the same movie. Perhaps through our transmedia or outreach strategies we can give our audiences multiple access points to the most essential information in our films, in ways that can make it stick.

5. Don't Underestimate the Power of Play

The game creators at Games for Change are addressing serious issues — sometimes deadly serious — but they are doing it through fun and play. If I took anything away from the series of talks, it was the important reminder that fun can be a very powerful motivational tool, and one that is under-utilized in the world of social change documentaries.



April 16, 2014

Impressions: 5,981,010

Tribeca Film Festival 2014 gets rolling



The Tribeca Film Festival is now a teenager. And like most teens, its eyes are on a lot of screens.

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The festival will, for the second year, feature a category called Storyscapes, with transmedia exhibits that use multimedia techniques to tell stories. Video games, too, will be mixed in with the 11th annual Games for Change festival.

This year at Tribeca, which runs through April 27, movies are only part of the story.

"Our reality has changed," says Jane Rosenthal, who co-founded the festival with De Niro and Craig Hatkoff. "Ten years ago, there was no Twitter, no Facebook, no Google. You have to find different ways as an artist, as a filmmaker to collaborate and tell stories effectively."

April 12, 2014

Impressions: 5,879,871

Ethical gaming: can video games be a force for good?

The online [Games for Change Festival](#) is linking with the Tribeca Film Festival to promote peace and creativity



Games such as Minecraft, are 'amazingly creative experiences and far more engaging than watching TV'. Photograph: Observer

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"Just two minutes changed people's real-world environmental behaviour for an entire week," says McGonigal. "They used 25% less paper products." People who simply watched a video of trees being cut down did not change their behaviour.

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A separate study at Stanford University's Virtual Human Interaction Lab simulated disabilities such as colour blindness. Researchers found that people who experienced blindness not only expressed more empathy but contributed time to volunteer efforts.

The focus on virtual reality in gaming comes as the technology companies begin to invest heavily in the sector. Last month Facebook acquired the virtual-reality goggles maker Oculus for \$2bn, giving a huge potential boost to a technology designed to produce the sensation of not just looking into a virtual-reality world, but actually being an integral part of it.

In announcing the purchase, Facebook's CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, touted virtual reality as the next big computing platform after mobile. McGonigal identifies several companies – including Valve, the creator of Steam; Mojang, creator of *Minecraft*; and Zynga.org – as committed to creating positive experiences. She hopes Facebook will hire thoughtful designers who will be able to connect us to reality, rather than disconnect us from it.

"Who can we have empathy for? What can we have empathy for? And how do we rally the gaming community?"

Chen says the games he grew up with in the 1990s helped him to become self-aware and ultimately a better person. At his company, he says, developers aspire to create interactive entertainment that can touch hearts. *Flower* was recently accepted into the Smithsonian American Art Museum's permanent collection.

He is optimistic about the field of positive game development. "We have a huge video game audience today, but still a rather biased portfolio when it comes to the types of emotions they create and its social impact. Today's game creators are changing that. I believe we will see more and more positive games coming into existence soon."

The technology poses as many questions as it answers. If virtual-reality games connect us to the real world, what does that say about our lack of connection? Are video games a source of "real" happiness? Do the positive emotions contribute to real wellbeing, or are these feelings also virtual?

Philosopher Bernard Suits, author of *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia*, claims that, if we ever create a perfect society, games will be the only reason to go on living. We would have to play, or else have no purpose in our lives, Suits argues, because they can bring a sense of service and collective meaning.

Like real-world reality, there is no single virtual reality, says Burak. It's an open debate. Some want to use virtual reality for behavioural change; some to make political statements. "The festival, he says, "is about the idea that the platform is attractive to anyone interested in social issues."

But, speaking personally, he adds: "I would like to see more design purpose and effort going towards creating empathy."



April 25, 2014

Impressions: 4,462,887

Kidaptive Reinforces Its Commitment to Early Learning, Introducing New Adaptive Games Featuring Research-Based Kindergarten-Readiness Skills

Wish Upon a Fish for Leo's Pad Available Today on the App Store; to Be Featured at Games for Change Arcade During the Tribeca Film Festival

NEW YORK, April 25, 2014 /PRNewswire/ -- [Kidaptive](#), an innovative edtech company focused on early learning, today introduced Wish Upon a Fish, the sixth appisode in its award-winning [Leo's Pad: Preschool Kids Learning Series for iPad](#). Leo's Pad is available today on the App Store and will be featured live at the [Games for Change Arcade](#) event, taking place April 26, 2014 at the Tribeca Family Street Fair during the Tribeca Film Festival.

Leo's Pad comprises beautifully animated learning games, called appisodes, created in collaboration with scientists from Stanford to teach children developmentally appropriate Kindergarten-readiness skills at home. In Wish Upon a Fish, characters Leo, Fusch, and Cinder guide players through a series of adaptive games tied to a research-based early learning framework embedded into the storyline. With encouragement from Leo and friends, players embark on a quest to catch the elusive Wishing Fish, a Koi fish with magical powers.



February 12, 2014

Impressions: 4,331,003

Tribeca Film Festival Devotes a Week to New Media and Innovation

The [Tribeca Film Festival](#) will take its latest step toward embracing new media with the new Tribeca Innovation Week, set to run during the latter half of the 2014 festival and aimed at bringing screenwriters, filmmakers and financiers together with hackers, gamers, coders and other tech types interested in storytelling across platforms.

Newly programmed week will encompass pre-existing programs -- including the second annual [Storyscapes](#) showcase of transmedia titles and the fifth annual Tribeca Disruptive Innovation Awards -- as well as new additions including the Games for Changes Festival (in its first edition as part of the Tribeca fest). Also on tap is a panel series that kicks off with a public talk with [Aaron Sorkin](#) (pictured, above).

Tribeca's new programming marks the latest expansion for a festival that has long aimed to get out in front of the increasing overlap between filmmakers, cross-platform storytellers, gaming and social activists. Over the last couple of years Tribeca has incorporated screenings of videogames including "[L.A. Noire](#)" and "[Beyond: Two Souls](#)" into festival programming, and last year launched the Tribeca Film Institute's digital-age storytelling conference TFI Interactive, returning this year under the umbrella of Innovation Week.

Film festivals in general have begun to look to beyond the traditional borders of film for cross-platform works that draw on the visual storytelling vocabulary of movies. In Gotham, the New York Film Festival also has incorporated new media through its [Convergence](#) programming, which last year included [panels and a concert from the creators of "Grand Theft Auto V."](#)

The 2014 Innovation Week lineup includes Tribeca's annual Disruptive Innovation Awards, which recognize game-changers in all fields and this year will honor Warby Parker, Sesame Workshop and the founders of Shutterstock, IdeaPaint, Pencils of Promise and TEDMED, among others. Also part of the week are Storyscapes, hackathon Tribeca Hacks and the Future of Film Live series of panels that launches with Sorkin.

New to the Tribeca fest this year is [Games for Change](#), the org whose 10-year-old Games for Change Festival is the biggest gaming event in Gotham. The fest -- which this year runs April 22-24 and 26 and focuses on gaming and social impact -- will this year be part of the Tribeca fest for the first time, with the Games for Change Public Arcade set to be part of Tribeca's annual downtown street fair.

The 2014 Tribeca Film Festival is scheduled for April 16-27, with Innovation Week running April 21-26.

BloombergBusinessweek News

April 16, 2014

Impressions: 3,594,570

At Tribeca, movies are only part of the story

NEW YORK (AP) -- The Tribeca Film Festival is now a teenager. And like most teens, its eyes are on a lot of screens.

The 13th annual New York festival, which debuts Wednesday night, will present not just 80-plus feature films, but also an "Innovation Week" that seems designed to capture some of the tech energy of South by Southwest.

The festival will, for the second year, feature a category called Storyscapes, with transmedia exhibits that use multimedia techniques to tell stories. Video games, too, will be mixed in with the 11th annual Games for Change festival.

The addition of other forms of media, though, is also a way to open doors to new audiences. Geoff Gilmore, chief creative officer of Tribeca Enterprises, says festivals need to adapt to increasingly tech-savvy moviegoers.

"What is the new world of story for a new generation?" asks Gilmore. "We find it by showcasing work — including work that's transmedia, including work that's from the Web, including work that's gaming — but also in just different ways of thinking about it. That's the future of film festivals."

April 29, 2014

Impressions: 3,268,367

The Emotional Experience Of Video Games: 'Journey' Creator Talks Developing Games That Move Players



When [Jenova Chen](#) founded thatgamecompany in 2006, he wasn't trying to create the next Bungie or Activision. Instead, the now 33-year-old game designer, who was then 25, wanted to find a way to create emotional connections with players through video games.

Chen, who was born in Shanghai and moved to the United States in 2003, met with International Business Times in the lobby of a modern West Village hotel last week, hours before he was to deliver the closing keynote speech at the 2014 [Games For Change Festival](#), a division of the Tribeca Film Festival.

Chen, who was running on mere hours of sleep after a redeye flight from the West Coast, spoke candidly about the first time he was genuinely moved by a video game experience -- while playing RPG "[The Legend of Sword and Fairy](#)," which reached China in 1996. It was a transformative experience.

“In many ways, the story is very similar to ‘Final Fantasy VII,’” Chen told IB Times. “You spend a lot of time with this female lead, somewhere in the middle of the story, she dies, and it’s a typical Romeo and Juliet story. The execution was good enough, where as a teenager, I’d never been exposed to this type of tragic loss, it was really my first time experiencing it. The game made me cry. That game was so good, this whole generation of Chinese players all remember growing up and crying to this game.”

Chen also discussed what happens when a generation of young gamers grows up – and the challenge of appealing to an entirely new demographic of players.

“A lot of people I know who used to play games, went to college and stopped...I was able to play a lot more than my friends who got busy with work and family, they don’t have that luxury anymore. But they still watch films. They still go to concerts, they still go to sports events, why do they put the game down?” Chen hopes thatgamecompany’s projects will appeal to everyone, though he feels that “older people generally prefer more complex and more nuanced emotion.”

“Most of the video games that appeal to the younger generation are very much typecast, primal direction, it’s all about big power, big guns, being fast, being cool. Lack of nuance,” Chen explained to IBTimes. “When we make games, we’re not just making an escape. We’re making something from real life into this fiction. With the abstraction and metaphors, the fiction actually feels more real. A great painter can paint something really complex but they can crystallize it into something really simple.”

[Thatgamecompany](#) is the independent video game studio behind 2006’s “Flow,” 2009’s “Flower” and 2012’s “Journey.” The developer is known for mapping out games according to what they want players to feel, rather than by establishing specific game mechanics. Still, “Journey,” which launched on March 13, 2012, has won numerous accolades. He won six awards at the Game Developers Conference in 2013, including Best Game Design, Best Audio and Game of the Year.

“My intention isn’t to make the game that’s going to generate the most revenue possible. I grew up with games. It changed my life. It changed my social relationships with my friends. It defined my childhood. It’s something I really cherished,” Chen said of the success of “Journey.”

"Seeing games become more of a young person thing, I feel like a toy I grew up with has been left behind. I don’t want to. I want this thing to be respected by adults. I want this thing to be growing with me. It’s important to have games that could be more nuanced and reflective of the real world and relevant to adults,” Chen said.

None of thatgamecompany’s projects possess any dialogue. Instead, they’re driven by compelling music and scenic graphics that allow players to create their own experience and interpretation of his company’s titles.

“Language is very deceiving. In certain languages, there is certain vocabulary that doesn’t exist in other languages. It totally changes how people feel about things,” he said. “Being a Chinese man working on games, particularly console gaming, in order to find something that would really resonate with people, I had to find something that was really primal, very universal. I drew a lot of inspiration from Pixar, how a film can be well-loved by all cultures. It’s because they always talk about the fundamental things –

family, peace.” Chen’s favorite Pixar movie is 2004’s “The Incredibles,” a heart-warming film about a superhero family.

“When we’re working on games, I like the fact that there are no words, so we can focus on what is more primal. A lot of time when you don’t speak, the feeling is more pure.”

Though his studio has received positive attention and what most would consider commercial success, does Chen still consider thatgamecompany to be an indie brand?

“I was indie when we started eight years ago. But today, indie is very difficult. There are thousands of iPhone apps coming out every day. Most of these apps are made by individuals in their spare time. Are they indie? If they are, how are they different from us? It’s weird. Indie is not cool anymore,” Chen said. “But there’s something romantic and exciting about indie, trying something really new. My definition of indie is that it’s financially not proven. Basically, if someone makes ‘Flappy Bird,’ and it’s already proven to be financially successful, and someone makes a clone, is he indie? I don’t think so. You already know it will make money. It’s soulless. There’s no heart. It’s about the heart.”

Chen is adamant that financial success was never the company’s primary goal.

“With ‘Journey’ and ‘Flower’ we’ve never seen games like this in the past. We don’t know if it’s going to work. I believe they will work, because these emotions are needed in the industry. Even with our current project, it’s a pretty indie project. We’re trying something no one has done in the past. There’s a lot of risk involved, but it’s really exciting.”

Many people raved that “Journey,” a three-hour long endeavor for the PlayStation 3, was one of the best games in 2012.

“I didn’t expect ‘Journey’ to be game of the year, but I did expect ‘Journey’ to touch someone. We spent three years creating an emotional impact. That’s what we really want to see in people,” Chen told us. “We didn’t foresee the impact the game would have, when you actually really move someone. People have told us that ‘Journey’ is the best near-death simulation, because they’ve had near-death experiences. A guy who was clinically dead for 15 minutes and brought back said the final level of the game was the closest thing to his actual near-death experience.”

“I’ve had people send emails to me, saying they’ve lost their grandparents or father or dearest friends. A lot of them were having trouble putting their losses into terms. Then when they played the ‘Journey’ online player, they felt like they were being guided by their loved ones, and somehow they found a way to say goodbye. I didn’t know the game could have such a therapeutic effect.”

Chen’s company is currently working hard on a secret project he can’t discuss, though he feels it will be different from what’s currently available in the gaming realm.

“Now we have 2 billion mobile devices. We have 2 billion people playing games, and they’re not playing complex games, they’re playing like ‘Candy Crush’ and ‘Angry Birds.’ If you look at the numbers, the mainstream has already shifted. The mainstream emotion needs to change.”

Chen's closing speech, which took place on April 24 during the Games For Change closing ceremony, discussed the process of designing a new era of emotional storytelling through games.



February 19, 2014

Impressions: 2,676,401

Rapper Nas to Kick Off 2014 Tribeca Film Festival With Documentary, Concert

Last week, Tribeca also announced its first “Tribeca Innovation Week,” a six-day program during the festival that will include the fifth annual Tribeca Disruptive Innovation Awards; the Future of Film live panel series, which will begin with a discussion with screenwriter/producer Aaron Sorkin; the Storyscapes transmedia showcase; Tribeca Hacks Mobile, a two-day “hackathon” uniting technologists and content creators; the TFI Interactive summit; and the Games for Change Festival.

Tribeca will offer a new innovation pass, which will offer access to programs previously not open to the public.

THE DENVER POST

April 14, 2014

Impressions: 2,170,239

Ethical gaming: Can video games be a force for good?

A decade ago Asi Burak developed a video game designed to encourage opposing parties in the Israel-Palestine dispute over land to better understand – even empathise – with each other's point of view. That conflict may be no closer to a resolution, but the concept that interactive games can be used for more than mere entertainment, even as a tool for positive change, is looking like the next big thing in online gaming.

Next week, Burak's 11th annual [Games for Change Festival](#) will join forces with New York's prestigious [Tribeca Film Festival](#) in an effort to give video games greater recognition and counter the stereotype that this \$65 billion global industry can specialise only in war games, urban chaos and medieval fantasy.

"People understand that games are powerful, but they're also scared of this power," says Burak. "We need to change the perception that all games are shallow, violent and childish, because they are not."

Statistics show that gaming has outgrown its reputation as an activity for children and teenagers. The average age of players is now 30, 10 years older than it was a decade ago.



There are games for women in their 30s, and games for seniors to combat declines in mental function.

Collectively, the world now spends one billion hours every day playing video games – up more than 50% in three years. Meanwhile, the average young person racks up 10,000 hours playing video games by the age of 21, only slightly less than the time they spend in secondary education.

"People see the negative side and they talk about addiction, but there are many games on the positive side," says Burak. Games such as *Minecraft*, he adds, are "amazingly creative experiences and far more engaging than watching TV".

The festival will bring together leading software developers and thinkers on the subject, including Jenova Chen, co-founder of thatgamecompany and creator of the games *Journey* and *Flower*, and Jane

McGonigal, the author of *Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World*. McGonigal's thesis is that games can effect change in problems ranging from depression and obesity to global issues such as poverty and climate change.

Many of the new studies claim a wide variety of benefits from gaming, including improved attention, higher creativity and improved ability to manage difficult emotions, such as fear and anger.

McGonigal, co-founder of the health improvement game [SuperBetter](#), believes technological advances in virtual reality will enhance the power of gaming for good. To encourage a change in behaviour, she says, you need more than a video or a pamphlet. "Gaming does seem to be persuasive in changing people's thoughts, attitudes, feelings and actions in a way other mediums cannot."

The author points to a virtual reality game developed at Georgia University that places the player in the sights and sounds of computerised woodland and gives them a virtual chainsaw. They are then required to cut down a tree using a vibrating controller. After the tree falls, the forest goes quiet and birds stop chirping.

"Just two minutes changed people's real-world environmental behaviour for an entire week," says McGonigal. "They used 25% less paper products." People who simply watched a video of trees being cut down did not change their behaviour.

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A separate study at Stanford University's Virtual Human Interaction Lab simulated disabilities such as colour blindness. Researchers found that people who experienced blindness not only expressed more empathy but contributed time to volunteer efforts.

The focus on virtual reality in gaming comes as the technology companies begin to invest heavily in the sector. Last month Facebook acquired the virtual-reality goggles maker Oculus for \$2bn, giving a huge potential boost to a technology designed to produce the sensation of not just looking into a virtual-reality world, but actually being an integral part of it.

In announcing the purchase, Facebook's CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, touted virtual reality as the next big computing platform after mobile. McGonigal identifies several companies – including Valve, the creator of Steam; Mojang, creator of Minecraft; and Zynga.org – as committed to creating positive experiences. She hopes Facebook will hire thoughtful designers who will be able to connect us to reality, rather than disconnect us from it.

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Philosopher Bernard Suits, author of *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia*, claims that, if we ever create a perfect society, games will be the only reason to go on living. We would have to play, or else have no purpose in our lives, Suits argues, because they can bring a sense of service and collective meaning.

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But, speaking personally, he adds: "I would like to see more design purpose and effort going towards creating empathy."



April 24, 2014

Impressions: 1,966,343

Gone Home and Papers, Please honored at Games for Change Awards



The 2014 Games for Change ceremony took place last night as part of the Tribeca Film Festival. The two big winners were The Fullbright Company's *Gone Home* and Lucas Pope's *Papers, Please*. *Gone Home* took the "Game of the Year" award while *Papers, Please* earned both "Most Innovative" and "Best Gameplay."

Other winners included *Mission US: Cheyenne Odyssey* for the "Most Significant Impact" award; and the "Game Changer" award to Dr. James Paul Gee for his work on applying game-based learning attributes to K-12 classrooms. The panel of judges included representatives from Tribeca, EA, and Funomena.

"We are thrilled to see such expressive and high-quality games from both commercial and independent developers," said Games for Change President Asi Burak in the announcement. "By combining their passions and undeniable talent, these developers have succeeded not just financially, but also in presenting thought-provoking gameplay with real-world impact."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

April 10, 2014

Impressions: 1,724,953

Robert De Niro, Jane Rosenthal Preview Tribeca Film Festival (Video)

This year's **Tribeca Film Festival** kicks off April 16 and runs until April 27, and founders **Robert De Niro** and **Jane Rosenthal** sat with Speakeasy to discuss some of the event's highlights.

What we did is really try to make it easier for our audiences to find things that we're interested in," Rosenthal said in an interview. That includes music, technology and videogames — all part of this year's festival in the form of music documentaries, an "Innovation Week" of events examining the intersection of storytelling and technology, and a partnership with the annual Games for Change festival.

De Niro and Rosenthal also discussed trends in film (hint: they involve superheroes) and how they keep their festival broad enough for different voices and stories to be heard.

Watch the video.





April 27, 2014

Impressions: 1,636,789

Prizes, Please: "Papers, Please" Cleaned up at Games For Change



[Papers, Please](#) won big at the [Games For Change Festival](#) in New York (part of the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival). The indie game took home the "Most Innovative" game award as well as the "Best Gameplay" award.

"We are thrilled to see such expressive and high-quality games from both commercial and independent developers," Games for Change president Asi Burak said. "By combining their passions and undeniable talent, these developers have succeeded not just financially, but also in presenting thought-provoking gameplay with real-world impact."

Other winners included [Gone Home](#) for "Game of the Year" and *Mission US: Cheyenne Odyssey* for "Most Significant Impact."

The "Game Changer" award went to Dr. James Paul Gee, who focuses on learning in games for grades K-12.



January 22, 2014

Impressions: 1,567,992

Bigger Role for Video Games Is Planned at Tribeca Film Festival

The Games for Change festival, which promotes the development and distribution of video games with an educational or social-minded focus, will partner with the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival.




April 24, 2014

Impressions: 1,567,992

Games For Change Festival 2014 Day 2: Recap

Media Impact Funders was in attendance on Wednesday at the 11th Annual Games for Change Festival in New York City. The second day of the festival featured its awards winners, fun demos, and galvanizing panels.

by  Media Impact Funders @MediaFunders

Yesterday, Games For Change held their 11th annual festival at the New York University's Skirball Center for the Performing Arts. The day featured a number of powerful and informative talks from those in the industry, as well as demos and the presentation of the Festival's annual awards. You can view a fully archived livestream from the whole festival [here](#).



Media Impact Funders

@MediaFunders



Lots of fun and powerful demos on display in the Skirball Center
[#G4C2014](#) .@G4C

11:50 AM - 23 Apr 2014

1 FAVORITE



The day began with a series of "Morning Mini-Talks" where a variety of developers showcased their projects and ideas on how to create impact through video games.



Dan Ariely's talk was focused on how to best create motivation for change in gamers.





Carimu
@carimu

Follow

"We don't have a single piece of evidence that says... long term objectives work as motivations" - Dan Ariely
[#G4C14](#)

5:36 PM - 23 Apr 2014

2 FAVORITES

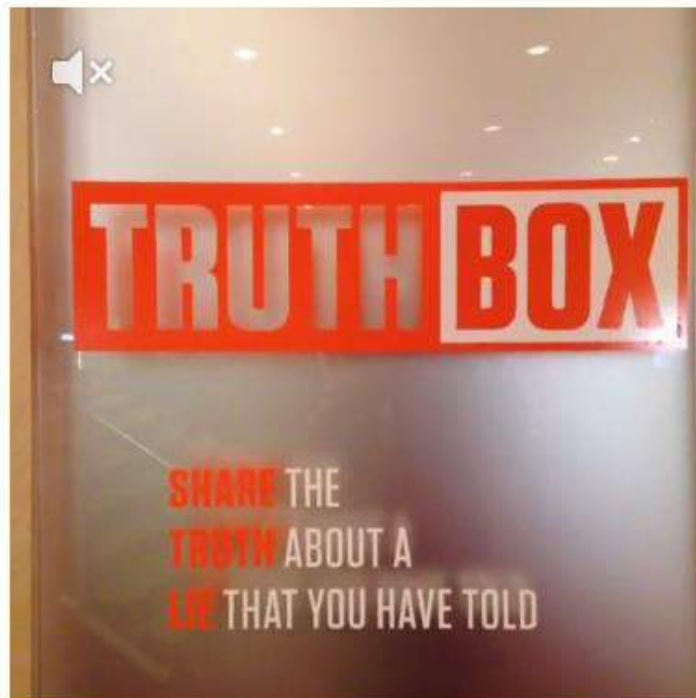


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What's the difference between honesty and morality?
[@The_Truth_Box](#) with [@danariely](#) & [@saltyfeatures](#)
buff.ly/1l3i9I2 [#G4C14](#) [#TFF2014](#)

5:15 PM - 23 Apr 2014



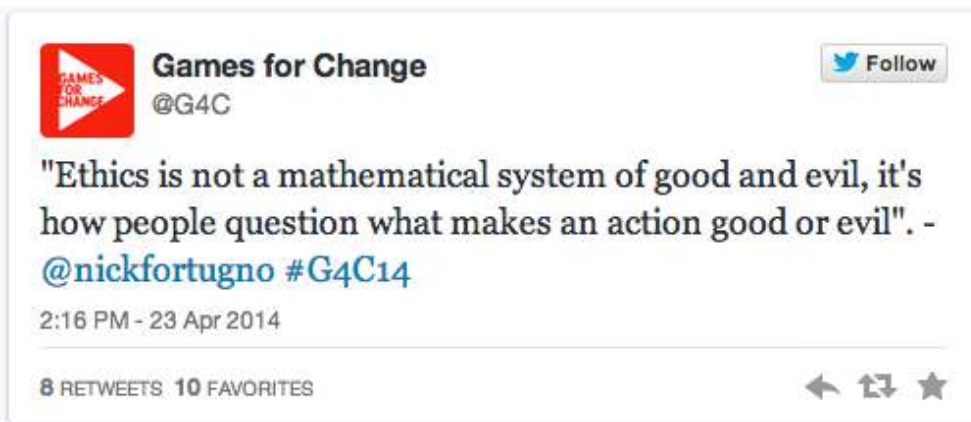
Vine @vineapp

1 FAVORITE





Zoran Popovic followed a similar theme, explaining how games can provide the right kind of positive reinforcement that children need to want in order to learn.



Molly Flanagan gave a very entertaining and audience-involving speech that referenced (and quickly demonstrated) her game Buffalo, among others, and spoke on the influence game designers can have in creating or breaking down gender and racial stereotypes.



kcwebgirl

Mary Flanagan has us playing buffalo from the crowd - batman, Obama, Einstein, lt. Uhura #G4C14

7 DAYS AGO



Oh my I am such a fan girl of @criticalplay Mary Flanagan. She never fails to poke the bear ;-) #G4C14 t.co/PWEcQkYMSq

TWITTER.COM · 7 DAYS AGO



Barbara Chamberlin

'We can't assume that by being empathetic, we are actually creating change.' #G4C14 @criticalplay

7 DAYS AGO



Media Impact Funders

"We can't fix social incidents without fixing their underlying causes." @criticalplay #G4C14

7 DAYS AGO



Games for Change

@G4C

Follow

Check out Mary Flanagan's reading list of research here:
tiltfactor.org/psychological-... @criticalplay @tiltfactor
#G4C14

2:49 PM - 23 Apr 2014

4 RETWEETS 9 FAVORITES



No stranger to controversy, Paolo Pedercini challenged the idea that metrics are going to be the saving grace of the impact gaming movement.



Pete Vigean

@greenghoulie

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"We are all working for different types of change -
therefore we can't talk about that term" - Paolo #G4C14

2:52 PM - 23 Apr 2014

1 FAVORITE





April 16, 2014

Impressions: 1,422,608

At Tribeca's New Innovation Week, the Future Is Now



With its newly launched [Innovation Week](#), the [Tribeca Film Festival](#) is calling on coders, gamers, hackers, directors, screenwriters, techies — and anyone with a story to tell.

The fest's latest addition features a series of discussions called Future of Film: The Story's Edge aimed at combining technology with storytelling. Tribeca's director of programming [Genna Terranova](#) says Innovation Week will provide a way of packaging more effectively a topic that's been on the fest's agenda for some time.

"The way that we framed it is new," Terranova says. "We have been doing these events for the last several years, but really felt we should bring (them) together so you can have a more fluid experience."

Innovation Week kicks off on April 21 with a conversation between writer-[producer](#) Aaron Sorkin and former presidential speech writer Jon Favreau, who will discuss the transition from an analog world to a digital one. Other discussions include Psychos We Love, featuring "Breaking Bad" star Bryan Cranston and "The Wolf of Wall Street" scribe Terrence Winter; and Stories by Numbers, with "House of Cards" screenwriter and showrunner Beau Willimon and "The Wire's" David Simon.

Games for Change, the largest gaming event in New York City that facilitates the creation and distribution of social impact games, will also join Tribeca for the first time to explore narratives and storytelling in gaming.

Taking a page from South by Southwest's exploding Interactive Fest, Tribeca's additions serve to combine the more traditional aspects of a film fest with the latest tech trends to reach a broader, perhaps younger, group.

"The importance of Innovation Week is to open up the conversation to a bunch of different audiences," Terranova says. "So somebody who might be really interested in technology and maybe more or less interested in film could find an entry point, and vice versa."



February 12, 2014

Impressions: 1,422,608

Tribeca Film Festival Devotes a Week to New Media and Innovation

Games for Change Festival will be part of the Tribeca fest for the first time; Aaron Sorkin kicks off the panel series

The [Tribeca Film Festival](#) will take its latest step toward embracing new media with the new Tribeca Innovation Week, set to run during the latter half of the 2014 festival and aimed at bringing screenwriters, filmmakers and financiers together with hackers, gamers, coders and other tech types interested in storytelling across platforms.

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The 2014 Innovation Week lineup includes Tribeca's annual Disruptive Innovation Awards, which recognize game-changers in all fields and this year will honor Warby Parker, Sesame Workshop and the founders of Shutterstock, IdeaPaint, Pencils of Promise and TEDMED, among others. Also part of the

week are Storyscapes, hackathon Tribeca Hacks <Mobile> and the Future of Film Live series of panels that launches with Sorkin.

New to the Tribeca fest this year is [Games for Change](#), the org whose 10-year-old Games for Change Festival is the biggest gaming event in Gotham. The fest — which this year runs April 22-24 and 26 and focuses on gaming and social impact — will this year be part of the Tribeca fest for the first time, with the Games for Change Public Arcade set to be part of Tribeca's annual downtown street fair.

The 2014 Tribeca Film Festival is skedded for April 16-27, with Innovation Week running April 21-26.



March 13, 2014

Impressions: 1,313,709

Last Chance to Enter Israeli Google Lunar X Prize Gaming Contest

This week is your last chance to enter a [competition](#) for \$25,000 to develop your own space exploration [game](#). Games for Change, an organization that aims to make a social mark through digital games, is hosting a contest asking people to share their ideas for a space game that "takes players to the final frontier," officials with the organization said. Interested participants must submit their game ideas by Friday (March 14).



The game should be created to benefit SpaceIL, an Israeli group competing for the \$30 million [Google Lunar X Prize](#). The grand prize will be awarded to the first private team to complete a set of goals including landing a probe on the lunar surface. Teams must be ready to launch by Dec. 31, 2015. To win the grand prize, the winning spacecraft must move 1,650 feet (500 meters) on the moon and successfully beam back [video](#), images and data to Earth.

"SpaceIL is seeking to create a crowd-sourced simulation generator that invites [players](#) to land a spacecraft on the moon, producing comprehensive data that will enable them to optimize the real-world spacecraft design," [Games](#) for Change wrote in a statement. "The game would allow players to have a first-person experience in navigating an unmanned spacecraft. Through customizing their spacecraft and navigating to the Moon, they will actually help SpaceIL optimize their real spacecraft and mission design. SpaceIL will gather data about the different orbits, paths, and maneuvers players choose and see how much fuel was burned to find more fuel-efficient orbits and optimize their trajectory design software — saving both fuel and money in the process." [[See Photos of teams competing for the Google Lunar X Prize](#)]

Finalists will be notified of their selection on March 21, and three finalists will present their game design to a judging panel on April 23 at the 11th annual Games for Change Festival. You can enter the Games for Change competition here: <http://form.jotformpro.com/form/40444386145959>



April 14, 2014

Impressions: 774,340

Tribeca is More Than a Film Festival: Four Family-Friendly (and Free!) Events



Tribeca Family Festival Street Fair

Saturday, April 26 (10 a.m.-6 p.m.) Greenwich St. (between Chambers St. and Hubert St.)

Highlights of the eight-block-long Family Festival Street Fair include the Food Feast Stage where foodies can catch a glimpse of neighborhood chefs sautéing on a live show kitchen stage; the Games for Change Public Arcade where the whole family can play games centered around positive social change; and, the Tribeca Studios Backlot which is a street-long interactive movie set.

March 9, 2014

Impressions: 1,078,634

Immersive Video Games: The Future of Education?

Tehran, September 1978. Black Friday. You're young and reckless, a photographer in the middle of a protest against the shah. Your friend is beckoning you toward the front of the crowd. You try to force your way through a group of people. You want to be at the center of the action. Then the soldiers begin shooting.



Navid Khonsari is developing a video game about the Iranian Revolution, and he needs it to be exciting. You have to watch who you trust and how you talk to people—your family, the woman in charge of the revolutionary headquarters, the storekeepers who sell lemon and cheesecloth to protect your face from teargas.

“The line should be, ‘Oh, I played this sick game, where I was throwing rocks at these soldiers, and then I had to navigate the crowd once the soldiers started shooting,’” Khonsari says. “And then, ‘Oh, and it was about the Iranian Revolution, which was kind of crazy.’ ”

Khonsari knows how crazy games are made. For five years at Rockstar Games, he contributed to blockbuster titles in the *Max Payne* and *Grand Theft Auto* series, some of the bestselling games in the world. As a cinematic director—working on storyboards, directing voice actors, and shooting motion-capture scenes—he made games feel more like movies. Now, he has gone indie with his own company, iNK Stories, and his job is closer to a game designer’s—creating a sweeping vision for his new

game, *Revolution 1979*, and finding the right people (and the money) to execute it. He thinks that games can do more than entertain, and he's not shy about his role in making that happen. "What I'm creating is the template for how future generations are going to be engaging with history," he says.

Khonsari, now 44, was 10 years old when his family fled Iran. They landed in Canada, where his father once studied medicine and Khonsari and one of his brothers had been born. The family settled in a small city north of Toronto, but Khonsari's peers weren't exactly warm and cuddly to the only Iranian they'd ever met. The new kid's lack of English didn't help. But pop culture did—Khonsari was fluent in *Star Wars*, video games, and comics. He grew up on *Tintin*, loved Marvel's philosophical Silver Surfer, and later started reading the subversive work of Daniel Clowes as well as Art Spiegelman's genre-transcending *Maus*.

Soon enough, he started writing stories of his own—comic books and movie scripts, which led him to film school. Not long after moving to New York City, Khonsari did a test shoot for *Grand Theft Auto III*, was hired to direct voice-overs for *Max Payne*, and, for half a decade, had a hand in every blockbuster Rockstar produced. Though he's worked on games with huge budgets, Khonsari has a soft spot for quirky stories: His first project after Rockstar was *Pindemonium*, a documentary film released in 2008 about introverted, obsessive collectors of Olympic pins. He met his wife, Bessie, a filmmaker, while working on the movie; she became "co-everything on it." Their next project together was her documentary film, *Pulling John*, about competitive arm wrestlers. Today, they live in Brooklyn with their two daughters, and while Khonsari tends to want to do "big, big, big grand things," he says Bessie (who's a collaborator on the new game too) "really appreciates the subtlety in the emotional journey of characters and putting that at the forefront."

With *1979*, they're aiming to hit both notes. To create the game, Khonsari has been researching the revolution history as if he were making a documentary—by interviewing people from his parents' and grandparents' generations. Much of his research comes by way of his own family, including cousins who were in college during the revolution and relatives still living in Iran. He's also enlisting academic and political experts, like the Carnegie Endowment's Karim Sadjadpour. Still a history major at heart, Khonsari says he is interested in moments of sweeping change—not just dates but stories from people's personal experiences. His own experiences color the game too, and the one that most strongly influences it is his sense that most people don't understand the real diversity of Iranian political opinions. "Someone like my grandmother, who lived in Iran, prayed three times a day and never ate bacon ... she never wanted a theocracy," he says.

When a player begins the game, he or she will get a quick run-through of the history of the revolution. But Khonsari is also working on building rich historical detail into the world that players will navigate. The main character is a photojournalist, and players can take pictures in the game and compare them with real shots of historical events. If they want to, they'll be able to walk around an Iranian house, check out what's on the walls, and turn on the TV and see Iranian TV shows. This exploration isn't required to get through the game. But it's there for people who are curious, and Khonsari thinks it could give players a sense of the revolution's history, much like *The Deer Hunter* or *Apocalypse Now* taught a younger generation about the Vietnam War.

Although making the game educational comes second to making it fun, Khonsari wants players to understand that Iran has a deep history, with independent women and a secular life. "For us to be able to put in different types of stories, that's the icing on the cake," Khonsari says.

"It's a very different animal; it's very forward thinking," says Asi Burak, president of the nonprofit Games for Change. "This game starts saying: This is a viable medium to say something smart. That's not obvious to everyone." And, Burak says, it makes the job of producing *1979* an uphill battle.

Games like this one often get plenty of good press, but the real challenge is grabbing the attention of actual gamers—and funders. *1979*'s Kickstarter campaign didn't meet its \$395,000 goal late last year, but Khonsari says it helped attract potential investors. (And the success of the movie *Argo*, set during the Iranian hostage crisis, hasn't hurt: It proves that there's a mainstream appetite for stories from this era.) He is currently working on developing these leads and asking fans of the Kickstarter campaign to continue to donate through PayPal. "This is meant to be a mass-appeal project," he says. "I'm still playing games, and I'm in my forties. I love being a gangster; I love taking out aliens. But I started getting fascinated with what would happen if you could engage people within a real experience but make it entertaining—make it a game." The goal is to release the game's first installment this summer. When that happens, Khonsari's own gaming revolution will be alive and well.

April 3, 2014

Impressions: 933,139

5 Things To Check Out At Tribeca Innovation Week



THE GAMES FOR CHANGE FESTIVAL

The Games For Change Festival focuses on the impact of gaming on positive, community-based social interaction. From April 22-26 at the NYU Skirball center, gaming takes center stage, featuring a showcase of some of the best and brightest minds in modern gaming, an awards show, and a free street fair, in the form of an arcade. Our carpal tunnel's already aching with anticipation.



April 16, 2014

Impressions: 912,158

At Tribeca's New Innovation Week, the Future Is Now

With its newly launched Innovation Week, the Tribeca Film Festival is calling on coders, gamers, hackers, directors, screenwriters, techies -- and anyone with a story to tell. Games for Change, the largest gaming event in **New York City** that facilitates the creation and distribution of social impact games, will also join Tribeca for the first time to explore narratives and storytelling in gaming.



April 24, 2014

Impressions: 894,784



Papers, Please scored two big wins last night at the 2014 Games for Change festival's awards ceremony, taking home the top prize in the "Best Gameplay" and "Most Innovative Game" categories. The 2013 indie game that casts players as an immigration inspector also won the grand prize at the 16th annual Independent Games Festival awards last month.



January 23, 2014

Impressions: 894,784

Hey, New Yorkers and/or people who care about gaming as a force of good...the annual Games For Change festival is now going to be part of the game-loving Tribeca Film Festival, April 22-26. Find out more [here](#). Tickets are on sale now for what is usually a very interesting event dedicated to the idea that games can make the world a better place.

April 29, 2014

Impressions: 889,801

Video Games for Positive Change



NEW YORK—It was love at first sight. The Tribeca Film Festival (TFF), established shortly after the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001, took as its goal giving back to its community in the form of storytelling. Games for Change (G4C), a nonprofit that facilitates the creation of humanitarian games for social good, began in 2004.

When the president of G4C, Asi Burak, met with Tribeca's co-founder Craig Hatkoff in late fall of last year, creating a partnership was a no-brainer.

"For us, it makes perfect sense because it brings us to mainstream. It brings us to the public," Burak said while strolling around the Tribeca Family Festival on Saturday, April 26.

TFF introduced its first-ever Tribeca Innovation Week, which culminated with the Tribeca Family Festival. G4C had an important role and a visible presence during the week and even integrated its three-day annual festival for game developers into the events lineup.

“TFF shares [G4C’s] mission to use storytelling as a transformative tool,” said Genna Terranova, director of programming at TFF.

“We see that games share some commonalities with documentaries, especially those that aim to educate and raise awareness and action for social change,” Terranova wrote in an email.

Parents take some convincing of G4C’s mission, though.

“There’s a lot of negative associations [with games],” said G4C’s director of external relations, Susanna Pollack at the festival.

G4C has partners that reach out to for-profits and encourage the development of corporate social responsibility campaigns. The games themselves have shown in different ways the good that can come of gaming.

Learning and Charity

At the family festival, G4C set up a public-facing arcade with over a dozen vendors who had interactive, physical, and virtual games for children aged from pre-kindergarten to high school and up.

Games included ones as commercial and addictive as Farmville, which raised \$8 million for various charities, and “The Running of the Stocks,” a social commentary on frenzied investors running around Wall Street.

Other interactive games at the festival were presented by the American Museum of Natural History. The museum’s associate director for digital learning, Barry Joseph, created an educational card game that promoted the museum’s latest exhibit on Pterosaurs.

An innovative game-changer at the festival, however, was “Shuyan: The Kung Fu Princess.” To be able to succeed, the player must learn self-restraint.

Drew Parker, the game’s creative director, said that users are looking for games that “are not about the status quo.”

“From an entertainment perspective, [players] just want a new experience,” Parker said at the festival.

As Shuyan progresses from level to level, her master teaches her the real, soft kung fu combat techniques. The game is set in ancient China at a kung fu temple, and it has accompanying classical Chinese music as well as backdrops drawn by a Chinese artist.

Parker brought to it four years of kung fu training and the belief that “Shuyan” doesn’t need to be full of violence to still be an exciting.



April 22, 2014

Impressions: 889,801

Family and Community Events at Tribeca Film Festival



Most of us are only too aware of the seemingly intractable problems we're facing within healthcare, education, community building, environmental sustainability and regional conflict. But could interactive games provide part of the solution?

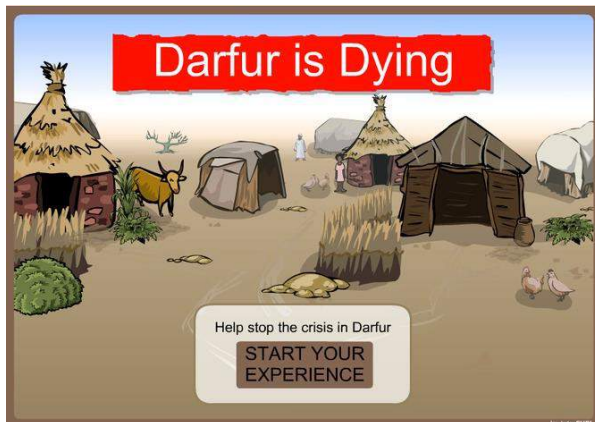
The organisers of the 11th annual Games for Change Festival in New York (April 22-26) seem to think so. In conjunction with the Tribeca Film Festival, the festival will unite game creators, policy makers and educators.

"Gaming for social good" – the use of digital games or elements of games for non-entertainment purposes – is a large arena that includes serious games, game-based learning, games with a purpose and gamification (or game thinking and mechanics in a non-game context).

Research from the last decade has shown that, in the right context, games can provide an effective and engaging medium that allows us to explore personal identity, actively participate in learning, build social connections and take part in problem solving and decision making in a "safe-fail" space.

Well-designed social-good games can produce positive outcomes by tapping into our intrinsic motivations and positive emotions.

There are games that tackle social issues, such as *Darfur is Dying*, which raises awareness on the plight of refugees in western Sudan; *FreeRice*, which provides a sponsorship platform for tackling world hunger; and *RecycleBank*, which encourages household recycling and waste reduction.



The use of digital games for non-entertainment purposes is nothing new. Its origins can be traced back to the early 1950s with the introduction of the first computers, when chess and checkers were programmed as computer games by scientists to run research in computer science and artificial intelligence.

But it was only when the the Cold War took hold that significant investment in digital games was made by the military to simulate war games for training and battle strategy evaluation.

Today, outside of the military, investment in games for social impact are undertaken by universities, philanthropic foundations and governments in conjunction with private sector organisations, and supported by advocacy organisations such as Games for Change and Games for Health.

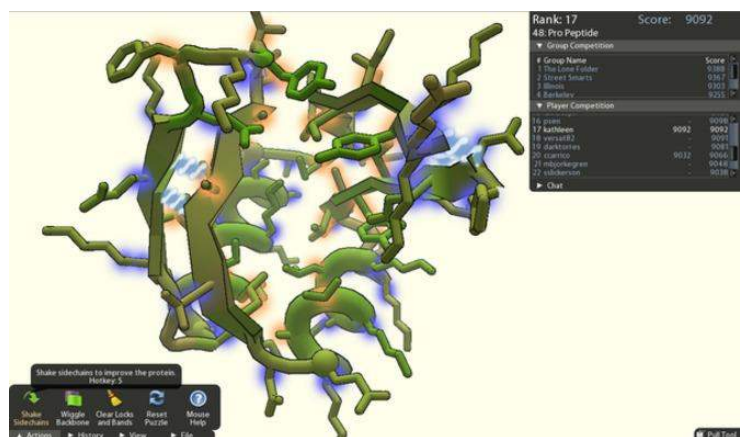
In the healthcare sector, games have been used across diverse fields such as research, rehabilitation, medical treatment, education and training. And from these, the following are some pertinent examples.

Health and Wellness Games

Medical research

The University of Washington developed the multi-player online puzzle game *FoldIt* in 2008, which focused players on predicting the behaviour patterns of protein structures with potential applications in the treatment of the AIDS virus, cancer and Alzheimers disease.

The problem of how to configure the structure of an enzyme, M-PMV retroviral protease – a challenge that had stumped scientists for 15 years – was solved in just 10 days after it was presented to 240,000 *FoldIt* players in 2011. This has been a keystone example of how the combination of a multiplayer games, crowd-sourcing and distributed computing can be used as a new and innovative form of collaborative research and problem solving.



FoldIt spawned other medical and healthcare game projects, including cancer research with games such as the *GeneGames*, *Eterna*, *EyeWire* and *Phylo*.

Rehabilitation

Videogames using virtual reality have been used in clinical trials for the rehabilitation of stroke patients to recover function in their disabled limbs. Both the Fruit Ninja game on Xbox Kinect and virtual tennis games on the Nintendo Wii platform were found to show significant benefit to patients and act as a good adjunct to conventional therapy.

There are now several iPad game apps on the market designed to assist with rehabilitation, communication and emotion management, including a wide range of games for stroke patients.

Medical treatment

Various games have been used as assistive tools for patients to manage their illnesses (while collecting data at the same time to further medical research).

The mobile game Pain Squad was developed to help young cancer patients record their pain levels, and Re-Mission was also aimed at young cancer patients to help them manage their condition better and encourage them to adhere to their treatments.

Healthcare games of this type have been successful as they provide immediate feedback and visualisation of the patient's condition in a novel, interactive and fun way. Most importantly (depending on the game, the illness and the individual) gameplay helps the patient feel empowered, and in control of a situation that more often than not makes them feel isolated, depressed and helpless.

Many other games or gamified tools are used, such as Triage Simulator, for training medical practitioners on emergency response, and gamified mobile apps that focus on building exercise, diet, awareness of substance abuse and behaviour modification.

It's still early days in the research and testing of games for social impact. Not all problems can be solved with a game-based solution, and any use of games must of course be undertaken as part of an integrated approach.

But with increasing pressure on the health system, alongside greater focus on prevention and self-managed care, games are showing strong potential as an innovative source of cost-effective and accessible solutions – just as they are in many other areas of social concern.

Marigo Raftopoulos does not work for, consult to, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has no relevant affiliations.



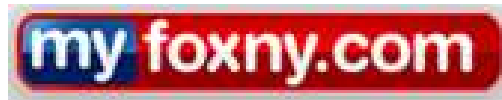
April 18, 2014

Impressions: 889,801

Family and Community Events at Tribeca Film Festival



In between ticketed family screenings, patrons can check out events at the annual Tribeca Family Street Fair on Greenwich. There will be plenty of interactive movie-making activities, the Games for Change public arcade, and performances from current Broadway shows, including the massively swinging “After Midnight” and appropriately for sports movie fans, “Rocky.”



April 16, 2014

Impressions: 869,849

Robert De Niro says Tribeca Film Festival is his passion



On the narrative side, there's the wacky vampire comedy "Summer of Blood" and James Franco's short stories make it to the big screen in "Palo Alto." There's even a video game tie-in through a joint effort with the Games for Change Festival.

Whatever tickles your fancy, this is one of the most fan-friendly film festivals around with a full day of free screenings on Friday, April 25, and chances meet big name actors and directors like "House of Cards" star Kevin Spacey via Tribeca Talks. It's all part of De Niro's long-term vision for the festival and its legacy.



April 23, 2014

Impressions: 786,246



Tech Sightings, April 23, 2014

Games for Change 2014: How Gaming Can Change Everything

Teaming up with the Tribeca Film Festival, this year's Games for Change Festival aims to expand the discussion about using games for social change, including their impact on education and their potential use for therapy.



March 13, 2014

Impressions: 723,503

New kind of video game inspires empathy



(WXYZ) - In a single day, Meghan Ventura may decide whether families can pass through immigration, help a father cope with his son's cancer, and assist a woman with her struggles in a developing country.

For Meghan, it's all a game. She plays video games that put her in the shoes of other people facing tough challenges.

"These kind of empathy games can bring you these really intense, rich worlds, you know, and present issues you otherwise wouldn't have known about," Meghan says.

The gaming industry is now massive, \$60 billion worldwide, and while these empathy games are a tiny portion of that right now, they're becoming larger.

"We live in a world where empathy is tough to achieve," says Asi Burak, from Games for Change. "This is a medium that could teach, that could inform, that could promote something very positive."

With titles like, 'That Dragon, Cancer,' 'Papers, Please', and 'Half the Sky,' players face a range of emotions as they deal with various dilemmas.

"'That Dragon, Cancer', which is about a father dealing with his son having cancer, and you know just being there with him and trying to keep his son just from, stop crying and there's no way to do it. It's just so hard to watch and to even play through," Meghan says.

The ability to make decisions for the characters is what makes the emotional experiences of these games appealing to people like Meghan. Her choices impact the outcome. And the games can impact the player, too.

"We're finding in our studies kids who play more pro-social types of games end up increasing their empathy over time and then behaving more cooperatively and pro-socially in the real world," says psychologist Douglas Gentile, PhD.

These type of games are available on a range of platforms, from video game systems to online. They range from free to about \$60.



April 16, 2014

Impressions: 712,016

Robert De Niro says Tribeca Film Festival is his passion



On the narrative side, there's the wacky vampire comedy "Summer of Blood" and James Franco's short stories make it to the big screen in "Palo Alto."

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April 9, 2014

Impressions: 677,724

11th Annual Games for Change Festival

If you've OD'd on Nintendo or Angry Birds, this extravaganza may help you regain your faith in video games. Founded to promote games focused on social impact, the fest invites experts like Google's chief game designer, Noah Falstein, as well as authorities in related fields, to shed light on ways these diversions can help address global challenges like education, health care and conflict resolution. Postlecture, relish some actual playtime by checking out any of the eight games that snagged the fest's annual award. Various locations and times.



April 28, 2014

Impressions: 661,597

2014 Tribeca Film Festival Draws Over 120,000 Movie-Goers

Festival organizers and Lieutenant Rosenberg of the NYPD First Precinct estimated that even with a rainy afternoon a crowd of 275,000 enjoyed the signature Tribeca Family Festival Street Fair and Tribeca/ESPN Sports Day on Saturday, April 26, which included Games for Change Public Arcade, the Million Dollar Arm pitching contest, live performances from the casts of Broadway shows including Wicked, Motown: The Musical, Rock of Ages and others.



March 25, 2014

Impressions: 661,597

Tribeca Film Festival Announces Family and Free Community Events

The Tribeca Family Festival Street Fair will feature an exciting lineup of events, performances and activities for the whole family. The Tribeca Studios Backlot will transform a downtown street into an interactive movie set where visitors can get an up-close look at the elements that go into creating a film on location in New York City. This year also marks the return of the Tribeca Food Feast hosted by Celebrity Cruises, offering food lovers a chance to watch neighborhood chefs create unique dishes on a show kitchen stage. Guests will receive a VIP credential to be stamped at various Street Fair activities with a prize for those who fill their pass with stamps. New to this year's Street Fair is the Games for Change Public Arcade where guests can play a variety of games centered around positive social impact. Street Fair favorites, including live Broadway performances, arts and crafts and puppet shows, will return to the annual celebration of the Tribeca neighborhood.



April 28, 2014

Impressions: 588,405

8 Smart Things Things Said at Tribeca Innovation Week About The Future of Film, Technology and Storytelling



With the ongoing goal of narrowing the gap between the creative and tech worlds, The Tribeca Film Festival introduced Tribeca Innovation Week this year. Incorporating the already established "Future of Film" series, the week also featured a variety of events which emphasized collaboration between storytellers and innovators in the film world, including Games for Change, Storyscapes and TFI Interactive.



February 12, 2014

Impressions: 588,405

Tribeca Film Festival Introduces Tribeca Innovation Week: Aaron Sorkin Talks 'Future of Film'



11th Annual Games for Change Festival - April 22 – 24, 26

Collaborating around the premise that digital games can effect positive social change, the largest gaming event in New York City is now part of the Tribeca Film Festival. This three-day international event held at NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts unites innovators and game developers with change makers and educators who believe in the transformational power of games and game thinking. On April 26, G4C and TFF will host the Games for Change Public Arcade as part of the TFF Family Festival Street Fair in Lower Manhattan. Join the conversation on Twitter and Facebook with the hashtag #G4C14

January 21, 2014

Impressions: 576,409

"Games for Change" festival to be part of Tribeca Film Festival

In the clearest indication yet that video games are growing well beyond their roots as amusements built on coin boxes and hand-eye coordination, the 11th annual Games for Change (G4C) Festival this spring will take place as part of the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival, where it will host a family-friendly gaming arcade in lower Manhattan.

"For me it's a huge leap because it means that for the first time we're bringing Games for Change to the real person on the street," says Asi Burak, the games festival's president.

G4C is perhaps the biggest player in the growing "serious games" movement, which uses digital games and simulations for health, education, training and social change, among other uses. The festival last year produced Half The Sky Movement:

The Game, a Facebook game based on Half the Sky, the 2009 book by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn about the worldwide oppression of women.

Craig Hatkoff, co-founder of the film festival, says Tribeca is paying attention to "the transformative power of gaming" that goes beyond traditional entertainment. He wants the combined event to bring together "the most



cutting-edge creators of games, educators, and the world's greatest story-tellers." Hatkoff, along with his wife, the film producer Jane Rosenthal, and Robert DeNiro, founded the film festival in 2001, after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, to promote economic revitalization in lower Manhattan.

According to the Electronic Software Association, the video game industry's lobbying organization, consumers in 2012 spent nearly \$21 billion on video games, hardware and accessories; 58% of Americans play video games and nearly half of gamers are women. The typical gamer is now 30 years old.

"The more I go on the subway, the more I see people playing games," says Burak. Yet many of those players still tell him, "Oh, I'm not a gamer," despite the fact that more than one in three Americans plays games on their smartphone. "To me it's one of those things that one day will change," he says.

Burak hopes the growth in the medium's popularity leads people "to start discussing it like you would discuss TV or any other medium."

G4C takes place April 22 to 24 at New York University's Skirball Center for the Performing Arts. The Tribeca Family Festival Street Fair, which will include the G4C Arcade, takes place April 26, over several blocks in Manhattan's Tribeca neighborhood.



April 7, 2014

Impressions: 542,281

Games for Change festival 'Shoot for the Moon' finalists announced



Finalists for Games for Change festival's Shoot for the Moon Game Design Challenge have been announced and will compete on-stage at the event on April 23 for a \$25,000 cash prize, organizers announced today.

The three finalists are *Moon Rush* by Lunar Rocks, a team from Ohio State University; *Rocket Science* by Chris Crawford; and *SpaceLL Academy* by Theorify. *Moon Rush* requires players to navigate and take pictures of the moon's surface, while *Rocket Science* is about finding "the ideal balance between engine power and fuel consumption" and using rocket engines. In massively multiplayer adventure game *SpaceLL Academy*, players take on the role of a recruit training in spaceflight simulations.

Games for Change is a non-profit organization that seeks to catalyze "social impact through digital games." Sponsored by the Schusterman Family Foundation, Shoot for the Moon challenged designers to create a space exploration game that "takes players to the final frontier for SpaceLL, as it competes in the \$20 million Google Lunar X Prize." SpaceLL is a non-profit company that hopes to land the first Israeli spacecraft on the moon.

The contest also features a People's Choice Award that allows the public to vote for the winner. Polls are open from now until April 10 on Games for Change's official website.

The 2014 Games for Change festival takes place from April 22 - 24 in New York, where it will feature speakers such as Jenova Chen, Jane McGonigal and Noah Falstein. For the first time in its 11-year run, the event is attached to the Tribeca Film Festival.



April 22, 2014

Impressions: 528,548

At Tribeca, movies are only part of the story

The 13th annual New York festival, which debuts Wednesday night, will present not just 80-plus feature films, but also an "Innovation Week" that seems designed to capture some of the tech energy of South by Southwest.

The festival will, for the second year, feature a category called Storyscapes, with transmedia exhibits that use multimedia techniques to tell stories. Video games, too, will be mixed in with the 11th annual Games for Change festival.

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

March 14, 2014

Impressions: 431,863

Shooting for the moon

At [Games for Change](#), a non-profit located in New York City, we believe that a dominant medium of the 21st century, used by 165 million people in the US alone, can go above and beyond mere entertainment.

Like other media before it—documentaries, graphic novels or non-fiction books—we at Games for Change set out to prove that games could engage kids and adults in real-world issues, and that games can teach, inform, change perspectives, and promote positive social change.

Since 2004, talented developers from all over the world have answered the call and created hundreds of games for social impact and learning. Millions of dollars have been invested in games that aim beyond entertainment—including by the US Government (e.g. the White House and NASA), large public funders (e.g. MacArthur and Gates), and private corporations (e.g. Starbucks and McDonald's).

One of the best-known examples is “Darfur is Dying,” which was launched by MTV in 2005. The game successfully engaged more than 2 million players and triggered 50,000 letters to Congress.

There is a Jewish angle in all of this. As an Israeli who has led Games for Change for the past three and a half years, I had the privilege to be introduced by a friend to the Schusterman Philanthropic Network.

The best partnerships, as with the most exciting ideas, are those that you can't predict or plan for. This story is one of those; how a conversation over brunch in New York City's Upper West Side led to a global project that involves gamers, world-fixers, and Israeli rocket scientists.

Schusterman is one of the most exciting organizations I've encountered in recent years. Founded by Charles and Lynn Schusterman, the foundation supports innovation that ties Jewish and Israeli leaders to their tradition and roots, while at the same time supporting those leaders in striving for “tikkun olam,” repairing the world.

For the Schusterman team tikkun olam is not a slogan or a phrase from the Mishnah, rather it is a life-long mission. So it didn't take much convincing to join forces and we soon launched a new project around digital games with Jewish values at their heart.

The first stage of the process was to bring the concept of “games for good” to a selected group of non-profit organizations. In mid-January, Schusterman and Games for Change organized a two-day summit in the SoHo area of New York City. Twenty invitees were flown in from around the US, Israel and Australia, not sure what to expect.

Through a series of presentations, hands-on game design workshops and curated games, the participants were introduced to the untold story of digital games, namely that this powerful medium has only just begun to scratch the surface of its potential.

Games, digital or physical, have been with us for thousands of years. They are a critical tool in learning about the world and in making social connections as we grow up.

On the second day of the workshop, after previously collaborating on inventing brand new games, the participants turned their focus to thinking about games to support their own causes, from creating a new public image, to triggering a global movement of volunteers among young Jewish Americans. At the end of the day, one of the proposed ideas was chosen to move on to the next stage: creating a prototype with a team of game designers and creators.

The chosen concept was in a league of its own. Created by the team at Spacell, it was literally rocket science. Spacell has been making headlines in the last few years for its dominant position in the Google Lunar X Prize challenge, which requires landing an unmanned spaceship on the moon. The Spacell founders, who met on Facebook, raised over \$20M million and ignited excitement across Israel and the Jewish world (fans include President Peres and a new generation now following their every milestone).

Spacell's mission is to send their creation, a spaceship not bigger than a washing machine, to land on the moon by 2015. If they achieve this, they will not only win a multimillion dollar prize, but they will succeed in establishing Israel as the fourth nation in humanity's race to the moon after the US, Russia and China.

To help them reach their goal, the contest we announced last month calls game makers, innovators and talent from around the globe to design a concept for a new game, one that would introduce a young generation to space exploration (the deadline for applications is Friday, March 14).

With less than a week to go, designers are competing for a prize of \$25,000 and the opportunity to build an early version of this game together with the incredible team at Spacell. Perhaps the most unique component of their concept is that data drawn from the virtual game is going to be analyzed and utilized by the team to inform their real-life mission.

In America, the "Apollo Effect" inspired a whole generation to dream big, think that the sky (or rather space) was the limit, and that innovation, science and knowledge could change the world and bring mankind to its highest achievements. Can we create the next wave of this effect? Spacell believes that it can, and a digital game will play an important role in that undertaking.

Finalists of the design challenge will meet on the stage of the Games for Change Festival in NYC on April 23rd to present their ideas in front of a blue ribbon jury, the media, and an audience of 850 people. We can only imagine the range of their ideas, but one thing is for sure: they will all shoot for the moon.



April 24, 2014

Impressions: 406,376

Gone Home and Papers, Please sweep Games For Change Awards

The Games For Change Festival hosted its annual awards ceremony on Wednesday night, honoring socially conscious games in three categories: Most Innovative, Most Impactful, and Best Gameplay. Game of the Year, the fourth and final award, was given to a game that embodied all three categories. Some 140 games were nominated, and a panel of experts in gaming, media, education and philanthropy whittled those selections down to eight finalists.

Lucas Pope, though not in attendance at the awards, dominated the stage. *Papers, Please*, Pope's brutal game about playing a border crossing guard in the fictional communist nation Arstotzka, won both the Most Innovative and Best Gameplay awards. Speaking with Joystiq via email after the awards, Pope shared his thoughts on why his game seems to resonate so strongly with players.

"It puts players in an unfamiliar position and asks them to make difficult decisions with no easy answers," said Pope. "The subject matter is unique enough to get people interested, so the challenge for me was to hook them early with the core gameplay, then build on that with an interesting story."

Most Significant Impact, the award given to games about social issue that also encourages players to develop empathy and respect for the subject, went to Electric Funstuff's *The Mission US: A Cheyenne Odyssey*. *Mission US* simulates life for the Northern Cheyenne tribe as it confronted the institution of Native American reservations in the 19th century.

The Games For Change Game of the Year award was given to The Fullbright Company for *Gone Home*, their divisive first-person adventure. Steve Gaynor and Karla Zimonja accepted their award in a brief video message which, as the ceremony's host put it, may have been the first ever selfie acceptance speech.

Papers, Please and *Gone Home* both received year-end accolades from Joystiq and numerous other outlets. Lucas Pope offered some insight into why games that address social issues are gaining traction amongst players.



April 18, 2014

Impressions: 406,376

The Super Joystiq Podcast specials just keep coming. Today, we have two interviews focusing on very different parts of the industry. First up, Anthony talks to Games for Change President and CEO Asi Burak, SoundSelf developer Robin Arnott, and Gigantic Mechanic's Gregory Trefry about the Games for Change initiative, and how video games can push for social change and be more than just entertainment.



March 27, 2014

Impressions: 406,376

Papers, Please, Gone Home, and more named finalists at the 11th Annual Games for Change Awards

The 11th Annual Games for Change Festival kicks off in New York on April 22, shining a spotlight on video games and developers pushing the medium not just as quality entertainment or educational tools but as venues for social justice. On Tuesday the organization announced its finalists for the Games for Change awards, honoring eight games for their gameplay, innovation, and their impact in highlighting specific issues from underage drinking to the dangers faced by migrants crossing the US-Mexico border. At least two nominees were amongst Joystiq's favorite games of 2013.



Leading the pack with nominations in both the Most Innovative and Best Gameplay categories is Lucas Pope's *Papers, Please*. The viciously depressing but highly playable border crossing simulator forces players to choose who comes into and leaves the fictional communist nation Arstotzka. Pope's game captured no small portion of Joystiq staff love, as Jess Conditt, Danny Cowan, and Xav de Matos all listed it on their Best of the Rest 2013 lists.

Gone Home, The Fullbright Company's divisive debut, is also among the finalists for Best Gameplay thanks to how it frames a story of family conflict and sexual discovery inside a gripping environmental mystery. Another favorite amongst the Joystiq staff, *Gone Home* was number six on our 10 Favorite Games of 2013 list.

Developer Preloaded is the final Best Gameplay nominee for its game *TyrAnt*, a real-time strategy game that details social and survival habits of ants.

Joining Papers, Please in the Most Innovative category are SoundSelf by Robin Arnott and Súbete al SITP by 12 Hit! Combo. Súbete al SITP, in addition to having some pretty nifty bus driving on iOS and Android, pulled double duty in Bogotá, Columbia since it educates residents on the newly revamped public transportation system. SoundSelf, designed with VR tech like Oculus Rift in mind, is a surreal blend of abstract visuals and sound by the sound designer of The Stanley Parable. Arnott describes it as a game that "takes advantages of loopholes in human perception to induce an introspective state of ecstasy."

Most Significant Impact nominees tackled social issues ranging from the intimate to the international. Migrant Trail by Gigantic Mechanic is a first-person spin on The Oregon Trail placing players in the role of a Mexican migrant worker attempting to cross the US border. It's based on Marco Williams' documentary The Undocumented. Kognito's Start the Talk, meanwhile, is an RPG built to help parents talk to children about the dangers of alcohol.

Rounding out the finalists is The Mission US: A Cheyenne Odyssey. A joint project between Electric Funstuff, public television station THIRTEEN, and American Social History Project, The Mission US simulates life for the Northern Cheyenne tribe in the mid-19th century as it struggles with the push of white settlers and the institution of Native American reservations.

The Games for Change Awards ceremony will take place on April 23 at the NYU Skirball Center for Performing Arts.

THE BUFFALO NEWS

April 16, 2014

Impressions: 388,664

At Tribeca, movies are only part of the story

NEW YORK (AP) — The Tribeca Film Festival is now a teenager. And like most teens, its eyes are on a lot of screens.

The 13th annual New York festival, which debuts Wednesday night, will present not just 80-plus feature films, but also an "Innovation Week" that seems designed to capture some of the tech energy of South by Southwest.

The festival will, for the second year, feature a category called Storyscapes, with transmedia exhibits that use multimedia techniques to tell stories. Video games, too, will be mixed in with the 11th annual Games for Change festival.



March 13, 2014

Impressions: 344,623

This game teaches players to make microcredit loans to the poor (exclusive)



Micmali is running with the idea of saving the world through video games. The company launched a Kickstarter campaign today to raise funding for a mobile game called World Agent BRAC that will teach people how to make loans for the poor in Bangladesh.

The Palo Alto, Calif.-based Micmali is working with the nonprofit group BRAC, which works in poor nations in Asia and Africa (along with Haiti). It will donate a portion of game proceeds to help microfinance education in Africa. This effort is part of a growing movement of games with charitable intentions, dubbed “games for change” or “serious games.”



March 31, 2014

Impressions: 329,722

Games for Change 2014 + Tribeca = A Great Day for Families in NYC

Gamers, screenwriters, and families unite! If you're in the New York area, join Common Sense Media co-founder Linda Burch, in conversation with other parents, at the [Games for Change Festival](#) during the week of April 22, 2014. For the first time ever, the Games for Change Festival is part of the Tribeca Film Festival.

Other highlights will include:

- An outdoor [public games arcade](#) on April 26, open to everyone on the streets of New York City as part of the Tribeca Family Street Fair.
- [Creating Games and Interactive Media for the Precocious Preschooler](#), a panel focused on the power of games to develop social-emotional skills hosted by Angela Santomero, creator of [Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood](#), Paul Siefken of the Fred Rogers Company, and game designer extraordinaire Jesse Schell
- Are you a [Minecraft](#) family? Learn how this online game is taking on [urban development with the UN](#), [world peace in the Middle East](#), and [learning at school, home, museums, in research, and beyond](#).



The Games for Change Festival is an opportunity for the whole family to come together, play, and learn. As a member of the Common Sense community, get 10% off Festival tickets with the code **4C14_csm**. Get more information about the event and purchase tickets [here](#).



April 25, 2014

Impressions: 328,682

Spacell Academy wins \$25K at the Games for Change festival



Spacell Academy, developer Theorify's massively multiplayer adventure game that puts players in the role of spaceflight trainees, won the grand prize and \$25,000 in the Shoot for the Moon game design challenge at the Games for Change festival, organizers announced this week.

Revealed in February, the [Shoot for the Moon game design challenge](#) tasked developers with creating a space exploration game that would help the [Spacell](#) team, an Israeli non-profit organization dedicated to landing an unmanned spacecraft on the moon in 2015.

Moon Rush, a game from Ohio State University development team Lunar Rocks that asks players to navigate to the moon with limited fuel while avoiding obstacles, took home the People's Choice award. Founded in 2004 and sponsored by the Schusterman Family Foundation, [Games for Change](#) is designed to promote "social impact through digital games." The 11th annual Games for Change festival took place April 22-24 alongside the Tribeca Film Festival in New York City and will wrap up April 26.

For more on the festival and its last-minute partnership with Tribeca, be sure to [read our interview](#) with Games for Change co-president Asi Burak.



April 25, 2014

Impressions: 328,682

Jenova Chen: Social games should be about an exchange of emotions, not numbers



A truly social game involves players exchanging emotions, not just helping each other boost stats, according to thatgamecompany's co-founder Jenova Chen.

Speaking at the Games for Change Festival in New York this week, Chen said he takes issue with many games that market themselves as being social because he doesn't believe they encourage social behavior at all.

"Social means emotional exchange, not number exchange," he said, referring to examples like Zynga's *FarmVille* to illustrate how most people's idea of being social is helping another player by giving them resources or stat boosts, or *World of Warcraft* and *Call of Duty*, where multiplayer matches tend to focus on killing things.

"I wanted to see if I could create something that is emotional between people," he said, speaking of the development of thatgamecompany's critically-acclaimed *Journey*. "Existing games are about killing each other or killing something together. The idea of social emotion means people need to share feelings. At that moment, the players are in sync. The problem [with many games] is there's no chance to share emotion. Most of them are busy, [there are] explosions everywhere. So we got rid of all the background noise and we had to get rid of the guns."

To foster the sharing of emotions, thatgamecompany reduced the number of players on screen and placed them in a deserted environment where they rarely came across another player. The hope was "when you see a person, you don't think 'I am going to shoot his head.'"

The developers also made the player's character small, because "when you make people feel big, they feel like gods. When you put two gods together, they fight."

"In *Journey*, we wanted you to care about each other," he said. "We removed [usernames], didn't allow friend invites; you're two people, you travel together, if you don't like each other you can walk away."

Chen said the development team went through 12 different prototypes before it settled on the final form of *Journey*, and that 75 percent of the game's development time was spent on research and development to find ways to make players emotionally connect with each other. According to Chen, in earlier prototypes, players gave each other grief when they encountered each other in the game, which wasn't the kind of connection the developers wanted to foster. Speaking to a behavioral psychologist, he learned that when players enter virtual worlds, they "behave like babies."

"Babies look for maximum feedback," he said. "And there's so much feedback in [virtually] killing someone. So the way we had to work against that was by controlling the kind of feedback was provided. We minimized the feedback for things we didn't want players to do, and maximized feedback for the behaviors we wanted."

So they minimized the feedback players received when they tried to hinder another player, and rewarded players with visually and aurally exciting feedback when they helped another player. The result was players were much more excited when they encountered each other in the game and, instead of trying to hurt each other, they formed connections.

Chen told the audience at Games for Change that he hopes to see more emotionally accessible games, and that future games evoke a broader spectrum of emotions within us like films do. "The only way we can do it is by putting our heart into it," he said.



April 24, 2014

Impressions: 328,682

Classroom games are likely to fail if teachers aren't on board

It's all well and good to develop games and technology to be used in the classroom, but if school teachers aren't on board, the games are likely to fail, according to a panel of developers and researchers speaking at the Games for Change Festival in New York.

"Presuming we're talking about K-12 public schools, one novel piece of advice is perhaps engaging a teacher in the

[development] process early on," said associate professor of digital media at the University of Wisconsin, Constance Steinkuehler. "Technology doesn't get taken up in many classrooms because it's a solution looking for a problem no one ever had. [We need to] make sure it's useful and it's a problem the teacher wants to solve, whether it's a conceptual understanding or making something faster or better."

Managing partner of Education Growth Advisors Chris Curran echoed this sentiment, saying that the question investors ask is whether the piece of technology — hardware or software — can fundamentally alter the efficiency of the teacher's life with the teacher as the starting point. If the answer is no, "you're dead on arrival."

The panelists emphasized the importance of communicating with teachers to identify what they need to ensure any technology developed will be useful, be used, be efficient and be cost-effective. It's not enough for the technology to be introduced to schools — teachers also need to be trained to use them, and they need to be armed with the skills to make the best use of the resources available to them.

Co-founder of publisher E-Line Media Alan Gershenfeld said one of the mistakes developers make is not understanding whether a game or game-based solution is replacing time or money in the classroom. If a game is aligned to a part of the curriculum, that's great, but if it's only covering half a day of a year curriculum, "[it's] not going to be enough."

"The big question is can game-infused learning be the dog and not the tail," he said.





April 23, 2014

Impressions: 328,682

Games for Change Awards go to *Papers, Please*, *Gone Home* and *The Mission US*



Papers, Please and *Gone Home* took home awards at the 11th Annual Games for Change Festival today.

Lucas Pope's *Papers, Please*, a dystopian simulator, won the Most Innovative category, which honors games that excel in creativity and aspire to bring new ideas to games for change. It was a finalist alongside Robin Arnott's *SoundSelf* and 12 Hit Combo's *Súbete al SITP*. The game also won the Best Gameplay category, in which it was a finalist with Fullbright Company's *Gone Home* and Preloaded's *Tyrant*.

Thirteen, American Social History Project and Electric Funstuff's *The Mission US: A Cheyenne Odyssey*, a game where players take on the role of a Cheyenne boy in 1866, won the Most Impactful category. It was a finalist alongside Kognito's *Start the Talk* and Gigantic Mechanic's *The Migrant Trail*.

The Fullbright Company's *Gone Home* won the Game of the Year category.

The [Games for Change Awards](#) drew 140 game nominations, which were narrowed down to by a panel of experts in game development, media, education and philanthropy.



April 23, 2014

Impressions: 328,682

How commercial games can engage players in social causes



Video games designed for commercial purposes can act as a springboard for engaging players in social causes, according to a panel of developers who recently spoke at the Games for Change Festival in New York.

The developers explained that commercial games can benefit social causes through a number of ways, which range from surface-level partnerships with charities, to working with non-profit organizations to design game levels that have social benefits for the players.

One example the CEO of Direct Relief Thomas Tighe cited was the charity's partnership with social game developer Zynga. In this partnership, Zynga sold an in-game item in *Mafia Wars*, the proceeds of which went to Direct Relief's humanitarian medical aid program. The \$6 special item sold more than 100,000 units, which resulted in more than \$600,000 raised for Direct Relief.

Going deeper, CEO of Pixelberry Studios Oliver Miao spoke of how his studio's game *High School Story* resonated so much with victims of school bullying that it partnered with cyberbullying charity Cybersmile to design its cyberbullying quest-line.

"We've had messages directly from players where they had just helped someone reach out to Cybersmile because of our game, or some players were texting Cybersmile while they were on their roof because they were contemplating suicide," Miao said.

"Every week more than 100 players contact Cybersmile directly because of our game, and those are teens who are being bullied, are self-harming or considering suicide. So we wrote our cyberbullying quest-line with Cybersmile to make sure we were imparting the right messages from within our game."

The developers said gamemakers can leverage commercially successful games not only for their reach, but also for their inherently educational components.

Lead game designer of GlassLab Games Erin Hoffman said the studio saw the potential for education in EA's *SimCity*, so it sought to tap into that potential through *SimCityEDU*.

"Computers and video games have a history of teaching technology skills just by being the way they are, so to be able to get them into classrooms is a very powerful thing," she said. "I think you can make the argument that the new *SimCity* is the most sophisticated toy that's ever been developed, and it's just mesmerizing to look at and it's very real and empowering.

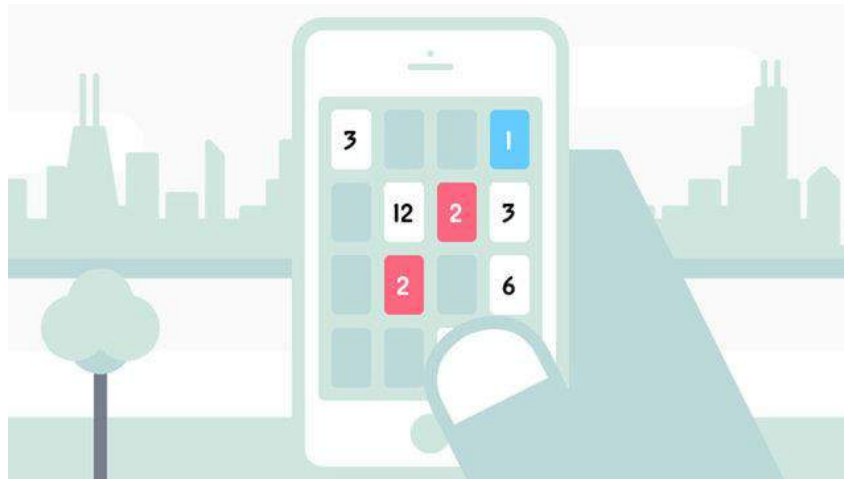
"[Because of that], we had the engagement of kids right away."



April 23, 2014

Impressions: 328,682

How to make educational games more effective



Changing the world with games is hard.

Speaking at the 2014 Games for Change festival, Zoran Popović — University of Washington associate professor of computer science and founder of its Center for Game Science — outlined why drastic transformative change with games is difficult to achieve, and what we can do to come closer to doing so. Popović discussed two "key" world domains that often look to games, scientific discovery and scholastic mastery for a wider range of students, detailing why games haven't revolutionized these areas yet.

Popović said transformative change requires a large amount of effort over an extended period of time, in addition to real-world synergy behind it and a design focused on outcome to begin with — including outcomes that are unknown. A game by itself cannot achieve transformative change on its own — people need to commit to it and put their real-world energy behind it, whether that means testing the game in lab experiments or real-life applicable.

There is hope, said Popović — although we're not too close to any of the outcomes we want to see from games right now. According to Popović, there is an emergence of a system that will lead us into the process of changing these problems with games, though it's not necessarily on the immediate horizon.

In order to make a transformative game for education, Popović said people need to understand the system it will work in. This system includes students, teachers, curriculum and classroom tools and how these tools extend from the school environment to the home environment. Popović and his team are developing the Engaged Learning Platform, which uses an "infinite curriculum" — this means, he said, that nothing in the game is finalized and there is always material suited to a student's current level of

learning. The platform is designed to find the optimal pathway from each teacher to student, a pathway that differs from teacher to teacher and student to student.

Thinking of educational games in this way broadens the design space, Popović said. Assessing and building the entire system and tailoring it to adapt to different learners can work for both math and text-based problems.

Data in an educational game also has to adapt towards the best possible outcome. Creators should identify what the smallest dimensions that promote learning are, and then build them outwards. Problems brought up and taught in the game need to be able to translate into real-world problems with solutions application outside of the game. Just giving students random concepts to deal with, without clearly demonstrating how important certain variable are, will result in students' failure to retain information.

Games must also positively reinforce in students that they are working towards a worthwhile goal. Telling them that they "worked hard" rather than they "did well" will improve their performance over time, Popović said, and will help them to develop what he called a growth mindset. A growth mindset is when children's persistence and drive in wanting to solve a problem increases, with the children themselves being the driving force behind their own desire to learn. In his team's studies, this mindset, Popović said, showed that children who struggled with certain concepts were more likely to keep trying to solve problems under the growth mindset system.

Popović and his team are working on another game, *NanoCrafter*, that maps biological proteins. The game is designed for collective creativity, a crowdsourcing game of sorts through which he team hopes to crack the code of building certain proteins.

"If you want to design something for maximal learning, you need a finer scaling with which to assess the curriculum," he explained. "We develop a thought process language — how to solve specific puzzles or equations or prove a theory — and generate challenges that develop specific thought processes or present automatic explanations and track players thinking."



April 23, 2014

Impressions: 328,682

How to achieve long term goals by changing how we think about short ones



Life is always a balancing act: in addition to planning for the future, we need to focus on our immediate environment. Many short term goals — like saving money and dieting — are ultimately beneficial for our personal futures. But in the present we may be too absorbed in the short term, for example not eating food we like or buying things we want, to see the long-reaching benefits of sticking to them.

Professor Dan Ariely, who teaches psychology and behavioral economics at Duke University, believes that understanding why we focus on our short terms goals and changing how we think about them could ultimately help us achieve our long term ones — and why we sometimes fall short.

Speaking at the 2014 Games for Change festival, Ariely said that in principle we know what the right behavior is, but we don't do it at the moment because our desire overrides our senses. This is applicable to things like overeating, not exercising and texting while driving. However, if a major decision is pushed in the future, we're more likely to say we'll do it — we'll exercise more, eat better.

"In the future we are wonderful people — but we don't live in the future, we live in the present," Ariely said. "And in the present we make mistake after mistake after mistake."

Ariely did not provide any clear examples of how goal-setting applied to games, or how others have [used video game principles to affect change in their daily lives](#).

Ariely said one solution to helping people's long term goals is to make them pledge towards the goal in front of other people. Getting people to live in a way that is more consistent with long term goals can be done with two methods, he said: reward substitution and what he called Ulysses contracts.

Reward substitution is when you re-engineer your environment to encourage forward-thinking behavior. Ariely said that at one point in his life, he was on a medication for liver problems that he had to take daily. The medicine would make him sick every time he took it, and he would have miserable nights. But if he continued to take it, he would get better. He decided to take the medication and deal with the nightly sickness and a year and a half later he got better. His doctor told him that of all people using this medication, he was the only one who took it all in time.

Ariely got through his sick nights by renting videos. He would bring home movies he wanted to see and inject himself with the medication right before he pressed play. He was associating something he wanted to do with something he didn't, and made sure his environment was equipped to handle the sick side effects of the medication. Ariely said it's about ranking the important things in life — liver health being more important than movies and side effects. Other patients on the same medication should have been motivated by wanting to keep their livers healthy, but they were not because of weak motivational force.

"The reality is educating people about long term objectives is just not going to work," he said. "We don't have a single piece of evidence that it has worked in the past."

Creating something immediate that people would act towards, something with a small immediate payoff, can push them to behave as though they care about the long term objective, he said. Bringing a reward closer to the immediate present, like what Ariely did with videos and medication, is more likely to get people to commit to a long term goal.

Another thing factoring into goal setting is regret. Regret isn't driven by happiness — it's driven by where we think we are and where we think we could have been. We are more upset when we miss a flight by two minutes than if we missed it by two hours because we nearly made it there in time. We compare to ourselves to a reality in which we think we could have made it, and that makes us miserable, Ariely said. Ariely cited a study done a few years ago measured the smiles on Olympic medal winners. Smiles were bigger on the bronze and gold winners, while silver winners didn't smile so widely — this was because they almost made it, and were too close to becoming gold medal winners. Regret drives people to think of the smallest steps they could take to achieve a goal, like winning first place or losing weight. Adding in regret drives compliance to long term behavior by almost 98 percent, Ariely said.

The second method, Ulysses contracts, calls back to the story of Ulysses. When traveling across the sea, Ulysses and his crew came across a group of sirens, who sang songs that would cause mortal men to crash their ships on rocks and drown. He made his crew members stuff cotton in their ears so they wouldn't hear, but had them tie him to the mast of the ship because he knew the song would affect him and didn't want to crash the ship.

"The contract is this: I know that my future self would misbehave, so let me do something now to prevent that future self from misbehaving," Ariely explained.

A contract could be anything from not buying sweets or placing an alarm clock farther away from you when you sleep, to signing up with a personal trainer to make sure you stay on top of your fitness goals. If you know your future self will not keep in line with long term goals, you can again alter your current environment and what's in it to ensure that your future self doesn't have the opportunity to misbehave in the first place.

Ariely also believes that these things can all amount to us creating easier ways to kill ourselves — obesity, texting while driving — so creating this kind of contract with yourself is good way to preserve not only our goals, but ourselves.

"It's not a case where you make one decision and it kills you, it's a sequence of bad decisions that will ultimately lead to your mortality," he said. "Life is tempting... We are making decisions as an outcome of the environment that we're in, and the environment we're in is interested in our short term well-being. The mechanisms we use to override these immediate temptations will only become more important over time."



April 23, 2014

Impressions: 328,682

Tapping into player psychology for Games for Change



Game developers looking to make games that promote social change should consider looking to psychology, because "we can't fix the social incidences without fixing the underlying causes," according to Dartmouth College professor and director of game research laboratory Tiltfactor, Mary Flanagan.

Speaking at the Games for Change Festival in New York today, Flanagan said that many games that have been designed to promote social change are only scratching the tip of the iceberg, and to address the issues that are under the water developers need to look at how our social biases contribute to these issues.

Flanagan cited psychology research that supported the notion that teaching people about injustices or discrimination and asking them to be empathetic toward others is ineffective. What is effective, the research found, was providing volunteers with counter-stereotypical messages. As such, she believes that instead of using games to raise awareness of social issues and hoping that the awareness will lead to empathy, developers should consider grounding their games in psychological design.

"Create a player experience that's fun first," she said. "If the game is about bias only, it [won't] work. If you remove the fun, [players] will feel like they're being preached to and it's not a game any more, there's no agency."

Tiltfactor has worked on games that have taken this approach, and Flanagan provided the audience with data showing the effectiveness of psychology-grounded game design in challenging player bias.

In *Buffalo*, a name-dropping game, players choose a blue "person" card and an orange "descriptor" card, and they have to name a person — dead, alive, fictional or otherwise — that fits the description. By

using random descriptors, players are forced to think outside of stereotypes. Some examples that were given included "female scientist" and "interracial superhero."

Flanagan gave the audience some key areas to think about when designing games for change, including hiring diverse teams, practicing useful framing, learning to move between research, audience and design, and tackling biases as a core part of the mission.

"We have to understand that bias is a problem every single one of us has to deal with," she said.

Additional information about Flanagan's research and psychological theories can be read [here](#).



April 22, 2014

Impressions: 328,682

Games for Change 2014: How gaming can change everything



This year's Games for Change Festival teams up with the Tribeca Film Festival to broaden its scope and approach to the discussion and examination of games dedicated to social change. Speakers at the three-day show in New York City include scientists, researchers, developers big and small and economists. Those experts gathered to discuss everything from fictional future games to the impact of gaming on education and the promise of gaming as medicine. We'll be covering all of the talks and big ideas coming out of the festival this week. Follow along with our coverage on this StoryStream.



April 22, 2014

Impressions: 328,682

GlassLab develops game that teaches kids reasoned thinking



GlassLab Games, the studio behind [SimCityEDU](#), launched [Mars Generation One: Argubot Academy](#) today, a game that teaches students argumentation and reasoned thinking. The studio also announced that it will make GlassLab services — a slate of analytics tools — available to developers who want to leverage the infrastructure the studio has built.

Presenting at the Games for Change Festival in New York, developers from GlassLab detailed the work and reasoning that went into *Argubot Academy*, a game targeted at middle school students. Collaborating with NASA and the National Writing Project, the development team sought to create a game that keeps students engaged, while also addressing Common Core standards in argumentation and reasoning, critical thinking skills and encouraging classroom discussions. According to GlassLab's Jessica Lindl, education has not changed over the past 100 years despite the rest of the world changing, so the studio saw an opportunity to come up with a new way of learning.

Looking to games like *SimCity*, which are engaging because they make kids feel empowered, but are also educational because they present players with complex problems that need solutions, developer Erin Hoffman said the development team decided to tap into the desire to feel empowered.

"We realized we had to connect with our own middle school selves," Hoffman said. "When you think of what it's like to be 12-years old ... the world is exciting but overwhelming. Kids want to feel relevant. They like things that make them feel more empowered in real life."

Which is why GlassLab chose Mars as a setting for the game, because "it's real, but it's fantastic," Hoffman said. "We wanted to give the players the feeling their future is different from ours."

In the futuristic adventure game, players are part of the first human city on Mars, and the citizens have to resolve their differences and make important decisions by sending robot assistants into battles of wits. Players equip their robots with strong, valid arguments about the future of life on Mars, and the strength of their arguments will determine the success of their colony. The game is [available](#) for iOS devices now.

According to Hoffman, the game has been successful during play-tests in getting students to make decisions based on reasoned arguments. The hope is that students will understand the reasoning and critical thinking processes that are used in the game, and apply those skills to other areas of life.

"These kids are talking about evidence," Hoffman said, referring to how players engaged with the game. "If we can get a kid to change their position on something based on evidence, then that's going to be a marker for us ... it's about decision-making. We're trying to build a tool that creates conversations."

GlassLabs also announced today that it is making its learning infrastructure tools available to other game developers via its beta program. Those who are interested in being part of GlassLabs beta can [sign up](#) with the studio and get access to infrastructure like licensing systems, authentication, profile management, and learning analytics engineering like data stores.



April 22, 2014

Impressions: 328,682

Google game designer details promising paths for games for change



Developers who want to make games that are catalysts for social change should look to mobile development, neuroscience and "blue oceans" as possible paths, according to Google's chief game designer Noah Falstein.

Speaking at the Games for Change Festival in New York, Falstein said as technology evolves and gaming fads come and go, developers should observe the direction the world is going in to find ways to maximize the impact of their games. He offered the audience what he described as "promising ingredients" for games for change — directions he believes are worth exploring.

The first was embracing online functionality and mobile devices. Falstein said more than five billion people will be getting smartphones and going online in the near future, and many people who currently have feature phones will soon be upgrading. Developers who make games for that audience will have an incredible amount of power. "If you make tools that can run on low-end systems, you're going to reach millions of people who will be coming online in the next few years," he said.

Being able to reach players is half the challenge, so if developers can make games that potentially billions of people can access, then that can maximize their opportunity to bring about change.

Falstein also pointed to neuroscience and psychology as an area where games can make an impact, and where specialists in the field are looking to games as part of their research. "We're going to see a lot

more of that two-way street where we can help [neuroscientists and psychologists] and they can help us," he said.

Developers should also look for blue oceans — areas that have not yet been tapped. "Often, new technology can be an opening in a mountain range," he said. "Sometimes it's a fad. Sometimes it opens a whole new continent." Falstein said developers shouldn't be afraid to develop for niches, and it's important to look for untapped markets.

Lastly, developers need to be agile and iterative, fail fast and keep going, and "don't bet against the internet."

"If you can combine all these different things and take the strengths of the best of what's come before and the best of what's coming in the future, I think we can make some amazing games for change," he said.



April 22, 2014

Impressions: 328,682

The best of 2024 in gaming will reshape gambling, pro-sports and the food we eat



In the future, video games will have their own Oscars and the nominees for 2024's awards will include games that let you print 3D food, gamify a mash-up of gambling and savings accounts, and earn real-world power-ups for your favorite pro sports teams.

Speaking to a packed auditorium at the Skirball Center for the Performing Arts at New York University for the kick-off of this year's Games for Change Festival, author and game designer [Jane McGonigal](#) walked the audience through the idea of ten-year forecasting and how it impacts game design.

The idea, she explained, is similar to how Jelly Belly jellybeans can be mixed and combined to create different flavors, like a banana split or candy apple. But with forecasting, researchers look at signals, things that have become important topics of discussion, and see how they could combine in the future to create something new.

In her latest ten year forecasting, McGonigal, a game designer, researcher and author, looked at a variety of signals and came up with five futuristic games inspired by the ideas that seem to be building buzz. In this imagined 2024, video games have finally come into their own and now have a gaming academy awards of sorts. These, then, would be the five nominees for those awards, and how they were inspired.

EVERWIN

Everwin is inspired by three signals. The first is the creation in some states of lottery-linked savings accounts. When someone makes a deposit in one of these accounts, it automatically enters them into a

lottery to win money. The second is research into how dopamine priming can serve as a motivation strategy. This essentially means that the desire to see immediate reward can be used to spur people to invest in long-term strategies. And the final signal is the rise of social and online gambling. When you combine these three signals, the end result is *Everwin*, or gambling for change. The idea, McGonigal said, is perhaps economists will start to see a correlation between the sales of lottery tickets with the areas with the highest income inequality. In reaction to this, perhaps states will start to use lotteries that will turn any purchase into a direct deposit into a savings account. It would be a loss leader for gambling companies, but could make it easier to make legal broader social gaming.

MAGICAL MYSTERY DINNER

The signals for this imagined game include the advent of 3D printers that can make food, research that shows Oculus Rift can be used to change how people taste things and a cow simulator that can be used to reduce meat consumption.

The result is Games for Mealtime, a movement that would be inspired by the knowledge that the consumption of meat has a high carbon impact cost.

"You are playing a game and eating food out of your printer that tastes good because of the Oculus Rift you are wearing," McGonigal said.

WALK MY MILE

This game is inspired by Facebook's purchase of the company behind Oculus Rift, Stanford Human Virtual Interaction Research Lab's work at prototyping virtual reality games that can be used for empathy building and the rise of autobiographical video games. It also looks at the 24 hour video of people's lives created by Global Lives and StoryCorps, a traveling installation that allows people to interview a friend or relative, record the audio and turn it into a record of someone's life.

The result, McGonigal predicted, would be Games that Democratize the Memoir.

"Imagine a world where Facebook connects two people in the world, allow them to interview one another to get a lifestory and turn it into a game," McGonigal said. "Then you can put on Oculus Rift and walk a mile in their shoes.

"We know that when we have these virtual experiences, we create neurons. Maybe we will solve the empathy gap in the future."

MEGA NFL

This mix of sports and video game was inspired by a couple of interesting facts and innovations.

Most users abandon fit trackers like Fitbit or Nike's Fuelband after 90 days, McGonigal said. But there has also been a rise in really successful fitness games like *Zombie Run!* Other inspirations include Healthball, a fantasy football league created by a bunch of out of shape gamers who wanted to combine fitness with the game, and work McGonigal did with Nike+ that hoped to allow gamers to use Fuelband fuel to help your team in fantasy leagues.

The recent rise in concussion lawsuits is another inspiration, she said.

The result is a game that would reinvent professional sports.

"In the future of professional sports you would pool your exercise with other fans, like all of the steps you take or miles you run, to buy an optional power-up in a real game," McGonigal said.

These real game power-ups could mean, for instance, giving the San Francisco 49ers an extra down or allowing a baseball pitcher to use a greased baseball or a hitter to use a corked bat.

"Pro sports would make you active," she said. "And you would be physically empowering your favorite teams."

SOCRATES 2.0

The inspiration for this educational game is pulled from the rising doubts cast on the current educational systems. Reports question the value and cost of higher education, the growing importance of online schooling, widespread gamification in classrooms and the growing concern over social jet lag, or the impact an early school day has on students.

The result is a game for a future without college.

In this particular game, the team took the signals a little bit further to a more realized vision to see how it could play out.

McGonigal played a video which showed how a future without the traditional bricks-and-mortar universities could mean a more meaningful education for many students. In the video, a student wakes up with the help of a circadian body clock alarm, studies by playing a question and answer game with a computer, earns levels instead of grades, and goes out into the real world to virtually apply his knowledge. The Socrates 2.0 program also includes things like meet-ups where a mix of experts, scientists, professors, hobbyists and students can gather to discuss theories and educate one another and using the same alarm clock to know when to go to bed.

McGonigal wrapped up her talk by having the audience vote for the winner of the 2024 awards and then noting that that same year would be the first time a game developer would receive a Nobel Peace Prize: Alexey Pajitnov for his work on *Tetris*.



April 21, 2014

Impressions: 328,682

Games for Change goes mainstream with the help of Tribeca Film Festival



The Games for Change Festival is changing thanks to a last-minute partnership with the Tribeca Film Festival. The more than decade-long annual game festival, seen by some as the Sundance of video games, is both narrowing the focus of its presentation and broadening the context of its content and in so doing, organizers hope, highlighting the ubiquity and importance of gaming in everything from education and health to science and entertainment.

"It definitely raised the bar," said Games for Change co-president Asi Burak. "It's putting a spotlight on everything this community is doing on the largest stage we've ever had."

This year's festival has been redesigned from the bottom up, with changes in everything from how the talks were selected, to the way the presentations will take place, to a new public-facing element for the festival.

For the first time ever, Games for Change will be a part of Tribeca's Family Festival Street Fair. The fair, which takes over the Tribeca neighborhood in New York City on April 26, will include a street set aside for the Games for Change Public Arcade.

"We will have Jay Street for one day," Burak said. "We will have a combination of digital and non-digital games on the street to be discovered by people who just happen to walk by."

The street will include a FarmVille exhibit of livestock by Zynga to highlight their charity work, [a display by New York's American Museum of Natural History](#) and street games by Come Out and Play and Sesame Street.

"The idea of being in the public space is to take Games for Change to the people who will see it for the first time," Burak said.

And that's one of the major themes of the show. In the past, the festival has fallen into the trap of becoming an echo chamber of sorts, a festival designed for people who were already aware of what games have to offer and their ability to change the world.



This new take on the festival brings with it a rethinking of both the audience and the presentors.

"I always stick to the converted," he said. "We tend to stick to the people who already love games. I don't want to lose the old audience, but I think there is a shift for a bit from games as a tool to games as a medium."

In trying to rethink the show, the organizers drastically changed the way they filled out the heart of the festival: the presentations.

Where in years past the festival relied heavily on submissions (last year they approved about a third of all submissions), this year they spent more time reaching out to find specific topics and voices in the hope of creating a more curated experience. The end result is a show that is made up almost entirely of sought-after speakers, and only 15 percent or so of submissions.

"It's more directed this year," Burak said. "In previous years we had a lot of speakers, but some felt it created an incoherent voice."

In looking back at previous festivals, the organizers saw that while they were good at getting big names to the show, those talks weren't always very meaningful.

Speakers like Al Gore and Sandra Day O'Connor were among the show's high-profile guests, but their talks often addressed the broadening of games' acceptance, a message that doesn't really need to be addressed anymore.

"They made the definition of games broader," Burak said. "But it's not just to bring someone to the festival who says games are important, it's how you can get people to show you game thinking, games applied in science or economics."

So this year's show includes speakers like Mount Sinai School of Medicine neuroscientist Dr. Adam Gazzaley, Tribeca Film Festival co-founder Craig Hatkoff, Planned Parenthood's Deborah S. Levine and Google's Noah Falstein. There are also plenty of traditional game designers lined up as well, including thatgamecompany's Jenova Chen, Superbetter Labs' Jane McGonigal and *Nevermind* creator Erin Reynolds.

More impressive is how quickly these changes had to come about.

Burak said the decision to partner with the Tribeca Film Festival didn't come about until last November.

"It all happened pretty fast," he said. "I happened to meet Craig Hatkoff and we were speaking of the opportunities and challenges of Games for Change and he said, 'What do you think about doing it together in April?'"

Burak and the organization agreed, but it meant shifting the festival back three months and out of the summer window when many of the speakers and audience from the educational field would still be working.

"It was exciting and scary at the same time," he said. "We've always said we wanted to be the equivalent or the little brother of Tribeca and Sundance. Suddenly it's no longer a slogan, we do have a public-facing event, live games, real outside outdoor games. Suddenly it is a festival and not just a conference."

***Good Game** is an internationally syndicated weekly news and opinion column about the big stories of the week in the gaming industry and its bigger impact on things to come. Brian Crecente is a founding News Editor of Polygon.*



April 7, 2014

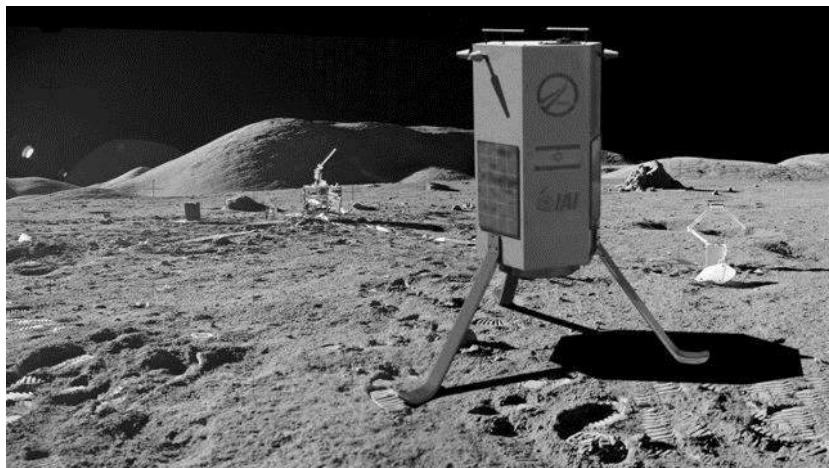
Impressions: 328,682

Games for Change festival 'Shoot for the Moon' finalists announced

Finalists for Games for Change festival's Shoot for the Moon Game Design Challenge have been announced and will compete on-stage at the event on April 23 for a \$25,000 cash prize, organizers announced today.

The three finalists are *Moon Rush* by Lunar Rocks, a team from Ohio State University; *Rocket Science* by Chris Crawford; and *Spacell Academy* by Theorify.

Moon Rush requires players to navigate and take pictures of the moon's surface, while *Rocket Science* is about finding "the ideal balance between engine power and fuel consumption" and using rocket engines. In massively multiplayer adventure game *Spacell Academy*, players take on the role of a recruit training in spaceflight simulations.



Games for Change is a non-profit organization that seeks to catalyze "social impact through digital games." Sponsored by the Schusterman Family Foundation, Shoot for the Moon challenged designers to create a space exploration game that "takes players to the final frontier for Spacell, as it competes in the \$20 million Google Lunar X Prize." Spacell is a non-profit company that hopes to land the first Israeli spacecraft on the moon.

The contest also features a People's Choice Award that allows the public to vote for the winner. Polls are open from now until April 10 on Games for Change's [official website](#).

The 2014 Games for Change festival takes place from April 22 - 24 in New York, where it will [feature speakers](#) such as Jenova Chen, Jane McGonigal and Noah Falstein. For the first time in its 11-year run, the event is [attached to the Tribeca Film Festival](#).

[Last month](#), finalists for the Games for Change Awards — which include *Papers, Please*, *SoundSelf* and *Gone Home* — were revealed.



March 26, 2014

Impressions: 328,682

Games for Change 2014 award finalists include *Papers, Please*, *Gone Home*



The eight finalists for the 2014 [Games for Change](#) Awards have been selected and include titles such as *Gone Home*, *Papers, Please* and *SoundSelf*, organizers announced today.

For Most Significant Impact, submissions have been narrowed down to *The Mission US: A Cheyenne Odyssey*, *Start the Talk* and *Migrant Trail*. In the Most Innovative category, finalists are *SoundSelf* and *Súbete al SITP*. *Gone Home* and *TryAnt* are nominated for Best Gameplay. Lucas Pope's *Papers, Please* is the only game to be nominated in both the Most Innovative and Best Gameplay categories. Schell Games CEO Jesse Schell will host the event.

"Whether crowd-funded or supported by public and private funding, the finalists reflect the increasing diversity of forms, audiences and subject matter embraced by developers making games for change," organizers said. "To reach this stage, game developers from around the world were asked to submit

their games for consideration by a blue-ribbon panel of judges featuring leaders of the gaming community, philanthropic sector, non-profits and education."

Games for Change is a non-profit organization that "catalyzes social impact through digital games." The award ceremony will take place April 23 as part of the 11th Annual Games for Change Festival. The event is part of Tribeca Innovation Week during the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival.

During the 16th Annual Independent Games Festival awards, *Papers, Please* took home [nearly half the awards](#) during the show — including the Seumas McNally Grand Prize.



February 13, 2014

Impressions: 328,682

2014 Games for Change speakers announced



The Games for Change festival today announced its lineup of keynote speakers, including Jenova Chen, Jane McGonigal and Noah Falstein.

Taking place from [April 22-24, 2014](#), at the Skirball Center for the Performing Arts in New York, the event looks at how games can be used to improve lives. Now in its 11th year, Games for Change will be held as [part of the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival](#).

Jenova Chen is best known as one of the designers of [Journey](#) at thatgamecompany, and a vocal proponent of video games [that use emotional language](#). Jane McGonigal is a game designer and the author of *Reality is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World*. Noah Falstein is chief game designer at Google.

Other speakers will include behaviorist and author Dan Ariely; neuroscientist Adam Gazzaley; professor of computer science Deborah Estrin and Josh Larson, designer of [That Dragon, Cancer](#).

"We're thrilled to see such a heightened level of interest in this year's festival," said Ken Weber, chair of Games for Change. "Games with social impact elements are increasingly finding their way into people's daily lives, into leisure time, classrooms, even medical research. This year's speakers are proof that creative people at the top of their fields are thinking about how games can change lives for the better."



January 21, 2014

Impressions: 328,682

Games for Change boosted by Tribeca Film Festival link



Lower Manhattan in April becomes a place, for one day, where families throng in their hundreds and thousands, to look at entertainment provided by exhibitors at the [Tribeca Film Festival](#). This year, there will be a new attraction.

For the first time, the [Games for Change Festival](#) is being attached to Tribeca, offering a much larger audience for its mission, to advocate for games with serious messages or with a strong charitable element.

According to Games for Change president Asi Burak, the deal to link up with the TFF marks a turning point for serious games. "We celebrated ten years in 2013," he told Polygon. "The first decade was all about advocacy of the genre and the movement, but now we are seeing more and more independent game creators express themselves around big issues."

Burak said that much good work had been done by many individuals and organizations that helped increase "the public perception that this is something that is just like [TV and film] documentaries or non-fiction books." He said that more work needs to be done, and that game developers are taking up the challenge.

"In the past we saw those games being made by educators and non-profits," he said. "Now it's independent developers who have a voice and want to say something." He cited games like [Cart Life](#) that looks at homelessness and [Papers, Please](#), a game that offers powerful insights into how authoritarianism thrives.

"I feel like we are crossing the line into something that is more mainstream," he said. "When games are a part of something larger, like the Tribeca Film Festival, they can be very effective, and now we are a more public facing program because we are participating in the Family Day."

Games for Change is a series of lectures and workshops, due to be held from April 22-24, at the NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts. With the addition of the TFF Family Day, Games for Change will also be going out into the streets of Manhattan and demonstrating games, alongside other entertainment-focused exhibitors like Disney and ESPN.

Work being celebrated by Games for Change include [Half The Sky Movement](#), a Facebook title played by more than 1.1 million people, which has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to support women and girls around the world.

"Tribeca recognizes the transformative power of gaming that goes far beyond traditional entertainment value of games," said TFF's co-founder Craig Hatkoff. "The impact and integration has been spreading rapidly across virtually all domains. Of particular interest is how gaming for the social good has scaled, from education to health care from conflict resolution to religion. By partnering with Games for Change, we hope to bring together the most cutting-edge creators of games, educators, and the world's greatest storytellers."

The Games for Change Festival will host the fifth edition of The Annual Games for Change Awards. Award nominees are submitted by game developers and a jury selects recipients in categories like 'Most Significant Impact' and 'Most Innovative.'

Burak added that Games For Change needs the support of game players. "It's also on the game makers and the game players to be a bit more open," he added. "Our own community is sometimes almost uncomfortable with change. People say that [Gone Home](#) is not a game, as if it were a threat. In my eyes it's great that we are having new experiences and more people playing games on places like Facebook. It will support and expand games that go beyond entertainment."

February 28, 2014

Impressions: 290,435



All well designed games begin with a spirit of fun. Some games must deliver a serious and purposeful message, too. An example is [Nightmare: Malaria](#), an iPad game with a similar mechanic as the popular side-scroller *Limbo*. The difference here is its message: malaria is dangerous and kills, especially in developing nations. Actress Susan Sarandon voices the beginning cut scene, and the action takes place within a sick young girl's blood vessels and brain. The mission is to save teddy bears while avoiding mosquitoes. It's dark and chilling, yet still engaging to play -- no easy feat! When you die, a message about malaria pops up, along with a plea for donating mosquito nets. To preview the game, download for free, or donate a net, go to [Escape the Nightmare](#).

Nightmare: Malaria is part of a growing sector of what are called **Serious Games**. Unlike simple interactives, games have immediate feedback and require the player to accept rules on limited actions. Serious Gaming is used to teach and train K-12 students or as professional development. In fact, today's millennials should expect job training to be gamified. One of the "best-selling" free Serious Games is [America's Army](#), used for recruiting. Businesses use games like [Everest Manager](#) to teach team building within organizations. Some Serious Games are commissioned by corporations. Others, like *Nightmare: Malaria*, are created pro bono to raise awareness and possibly garner acclaim.

Serious Gaming

There are many outlets for reviewing research and development in the Serious Games sector. The [MIT Education Arcade](#) has a long history of innovation. One of its titles, [The Radix Endeavor](#), is a massive multiplayer online (MMO) game to teach STEM, made in collaboration with Filament Games. The idea is that when a student masters the game, skills and knowledge are also mastered. The [Serious Games Association](#) aggregates and curates titles for K-12, higher education, business, health care and government institutions. Its portal is especially useful for teachers -- there are Serious Games for almost every discipline. Teaching about dystopian society? Check out [Papers Please](#), a border agent role-playing game. Teaching civics? Try the games on [iCivics](#) or [Government in Action](#). For more, check out

the [Serious Games Directory](#) or attend the [Serious Play Conference](#). Also worth visiting is the [Serious Games Society](#), based in Europe. You can even sign up for the [Serious Games Academy](#) (I did!).

Games for Change

[Games for Change \(G4C\)](#) is perhaps the best known Serious Games organization. G4C promotes thought-provoking and impactful games. Each year, it hosts a festival and awards ceremony. [This year's festival](#) will be April 22-26 in New York City, and will join forces with the Tribeca Film Festival. G4C games are effective because they encourage clever design. G4C offers [a listing of games](#) to play and integrate into the classroom.



April 8, 2014

Impressions: 307,843

Games for Change Festival Goes Intergalactic With Three New Games

GR - Games for Change and the Schusterman Philanthropic Network have chosen three game designs for the Shoot for the Moon game design challenge, each in the running for a \$25,000 cash prize. ([Culture](#), [Dev](#), [Industry](#))



April 16, 2014

Impressions: 239,536

Films only a part of Tribeca

The 13th annual New York festival, which debuts tonight, will present not just 80-plus feature films, but also an "Innovation Week" that seems designed to capture some of the tech energy of South by Southwest.

The festival will, for the second year, feature a category called Storyscapes, with transmedia exhibits that use multimedia techniques to tell stories. Video games, too, will be mixed in with the 11th annual Games for Change festival.

The addition of other forms of media, though, is also a way to open doors to new audiences. Geoff Gilmore, chief creative officer of Tribeca Enterprises, says festivals need to adapt to increasingly tech-savvy moviegoers.

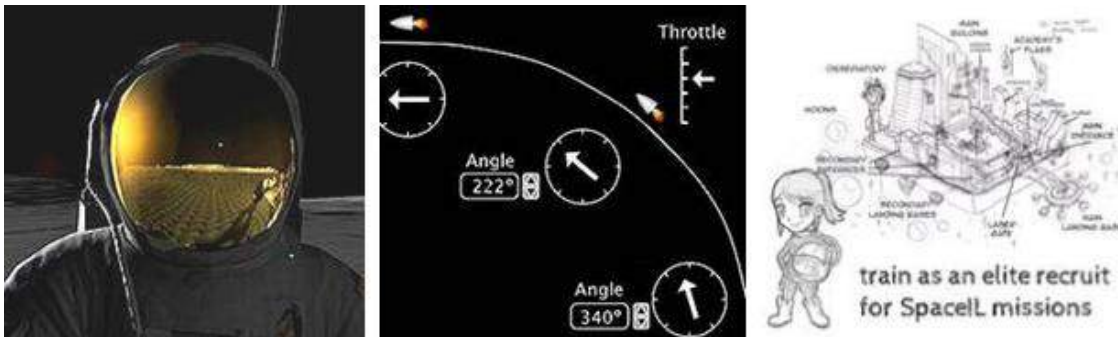
"What is the new world of story for a new generation?" asks Gilmore. "We find it by showcasing work -- including work that's transmedia, including work that's from the Web, including work that's gaming -- but also in just different ways of thinking about it. That's the future of film festivals."



April 7, 2014

Impressions: 213,283

Games for Change Festival Goes Intergalactic With Three New Games



Games for Change and the Schusterman Philanthropic Network have chosen three game designs for the Shoot for the Moon game design challenge, each in the running for a \$25,000 cash prize.

Games for Change announced the [People's Choice Award](#) in detailing the three titles in the finals:

Moon Rush challenges you to "strategically navigate your way to the Moon on limited fuel while avoiding unpredictable obstacles such as meteorites. Land at the Apollo 17 site and capture **photos** of the Moon's surface." Click [here](#) to learn more.

Rocket Science by designer Chris Crawford gives you "an unmanned rocket simulator for finding the ideal balance between engine power and fuel consumption." Click [here](#) to **learn more**.

SpaceLL Academy recruits players "to train in spaceflight simulations as a cadet at the space station academy. In this animated massively multiplayer adventure with realistic Newtonian physics, fly your customized spaceship on missions to nearby moons and complete STEM homework puzzles to graduate and join the fleet. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Will these games encourage a new generation of space-explorers to take flight?



April 15, 2014

Impressions: 210,848

The Games for Change Festival, An Event That Creates and Promotes Games With Social Impact



[The Games for Change Festival](#) is an event designed to help create and promote games with social impact. This year's festival will be held April 22nd through April 24th and April 26th in New York City. The event is partnering with the [Tribeca Film Festival](#) for the first time this year, and will feature [a series of talks](#) from designers and activists like [Jenova Chen](#) and [Jane McGonigal](#). Registration for the Games for Change Festival is [currently open](#).



January 25, 2014

Impressions: 208,007

Video games have bigger role this year

The organizers for this year's Tribeca Film Festival recently announced a partnership with the annual Games for Change festival. Games for Change promotes the development and sale of video games that have either a social minded or educational focus.

Video games have been presented at the Tribeca Film Festival in the past, for example, in 2011 Rockstar's L.A. Noire and in 2013 Sony's Beyond: Two Souls, had been included. However, this current partnership represents a more formal combination of games and films.

Craid Hatkoff, one of the founders of the film festival, believes that gaming has grown beyond entertainment and such a partnership offers audiences, industry executives, and filmmakers to relate with a new form of storytelling. "Gaming has infused every aspect of culture. People are clamoring for more ways to tell stories, be it a two-hour film, a six-second video or a video game."

Games for Change was founded in 2004 and has helped create and promote games that seek to improve society in some manner. It boasts the largest annual gaming festival in New York and has spotlighted speakers such as Sandra Day O'Connor and Al Gore.

Asi Burak, president of Games for Change, believes that "The conversation about games could be much more sophisticated and nuanced than it is now. We want Games for Change to help prove that games have a wide appeal. We've done a lot with stakeholders, with funding — we even got into the White House. But the idea that everyday people will have a chance to see what we do is a big step forward."

Burak added, "If I ask regular folks what educational games are, they don't know. For them, video games are just the big, blockbuster titles they see advertised. I want to change that — I want people to think about games having the same diversity as any other medium."

As part of the Tribeca Film Festival, this year's Games for Change festival will be taking place at the New York University's Skirball Center for the Performing Arts on April 22nd through the 24th. There will be guest speakers, networking events, game demonstrations and an awards ceremony.

January 21, 2014

Impressions: 206,104

"Games for Change" festival to be part of Tribeca Film Festival

In the clearest indication yet that video games are growing well beyond their roots as amusements built on coin boxes and hand-eye coordination, the 11th annual Games for Change (G4C) Festival this spring will take place as part of the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival, where it will host a family-friendly gaming arcade in lower Manhattan.

"For me it's a huge leap because it means that for the first time we're bringing Games for Change to the real person on the street," says Asi Burak, the games festival's president.

G4C is perhaps the biggest player in the growing "serious games" movement, which uses digital games and simulations for health, education, training and social change, among other uses. The festival

last year produced *Half The Sky Movement: The Game*, a Facebook game based on *Half the Sky*, the 2009 book by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn about the worldwide oppression of women.

Craig Hatkoff, co-founder of the film festival, says Tribeca is paying attention to "the transformative power of gaming" that goes beyond traditional entertainment. He wants the combined event to bring together "the most cutting-edge creators of games, educators, and the world's greatest story-tellers." Hatkoff, along with his wife, the film producer Jane Rosenthal, and Robert DeNiro, founded the film festival in 2001, after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, to promote economic revitalization in lower Manhattan.

According to the Electronic Software Association, the video game industry's lobbying organization, consumers in 2012 spent nearly \$21 billion on video games, hardware and accessories; 58% of



Americans play video games and nearly half of gamers are women. The typical gamer is now 30 years old.

"The more I go on the subway, the more I see people playing games," says Burak. Yet many of those players still tell him, "Oh, I'm not a gamer," despite the fact that more than one in three Americans plays games on their smartphone. "To me it's one of those things that one day will change," he says.

Burak hopes the growth in the medium's popularity leads people "to start discussing it like you would discuss TV or any other medium."

G4C takes place April 22 to 24 at New York University's Skirball Center for the Performing Arts. The Tribeca Family Festival Street Fair, which will include the G4C Arcade, takes place April 26, over several blocks in Manhattan's Tribeca neighborhood.



April 16, 2014

Impressions: 199,655

At Tribeca, movies are only part of the story

NEW YORK (AP) — The Tribeca Film Festival is now a teenager. And like most teens, its eyes are on a lot of screens.

The 13th annual New York festival, which debuts Wednesday night, will present not just 80-plus feature films, but also an "Innovation Week" that seems designed to capture some of the tech energy of South by Southwest.

The festival will, for the second year, feature a category called Storyscapes, with transmedia exhibits that use multimedia techniques to tell stories. Video games, too, will be mixed in with the 11th annual Games for Change festival.

The addition of other forms of media, though, is also a way to open doors to new audiences. Geoff Gilmore, chief creative officer of Tribeca Enterprises, says festivals need to adapt to increasingly tech-savvy moviegoers.

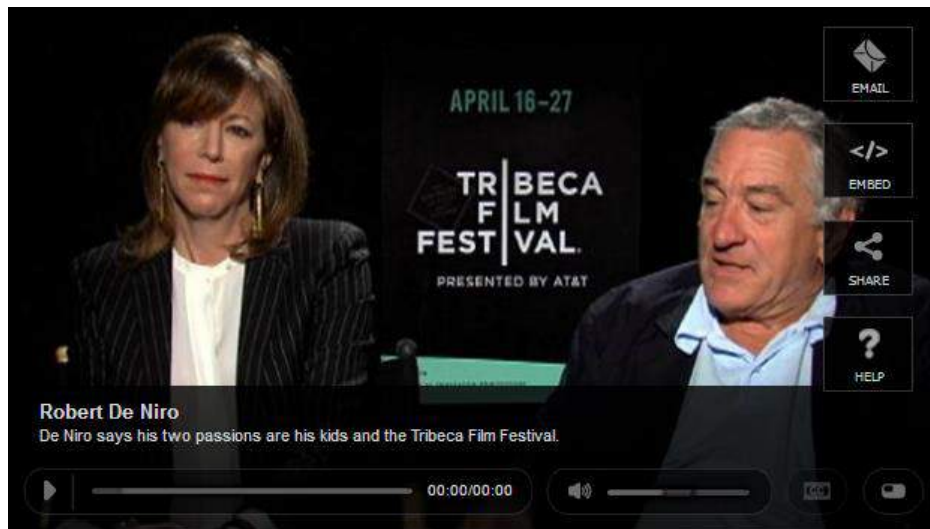
"What is the new world of story for a new generation?" asks Gilmore. "We find it by showcasing work — including work that's transmedia, including work that's from the Web, including work that's gaming — but also in just different ways of thinking about it. That's the future of film festivals."



April 16, 2014

Impressions: 188,915

Robert De Niro says Tribeca Film Festival is his passion



Robert De Niro is a family man, a filmmaker, an entrepreneur and one of my favorite actors of all time. He's also a co-founder of the [Tribeca Film Festival](#), which has more to see than ever before.

De Niro wears just as many hats on screen as he does in real life. The father of six starred in six films last year, owns four restaurants and a hotel, and still finds time each spring for the Tribeca Film Festival, Lower Manhattan's annual cinematic showcase which he co-founded with producer Jane Rosenthal.

"This festival is something that we started twelve years ago and it is [amazing](#) how much its grown," he says. "We just were doing the festival because of 9/11 to help the neighborhood, to revitalize it."

Alright fellow movie nerds, ready for some crazy trivia? "Star Wars Episode II - Attack of the Clones" premiered at the first Tribeca Film Festival in 2002. Since then, festival has more than tripled in size and with hundreds of documentary and narrative options to choose from, there is truly something for everyone.

"There's a wonderful film that Katie Holmes is in," De Niro says. "Chris Messina makes his directorial debut."

For music lovers, there's the NAS documentary called "Time is Illmatic" and the rock doc "Super Duper Alice Cooper."

Sports fans can hit up the Sports Film Festival, a partnership with ESPN featuring an all-star Knicks documentary "When the Garden was Eden."

On the narrative side, there's the wacky vampire comedy "Summer of Blood" and James Franco's short stories make it to the big screen in "Palo Alto."

There's even a [video](#) game tie-in through a joint effort with the Games for Change Festival. Whatever tickles your fancy, this is one of the most fan-friendly film festivals around with a full day of free screenings on Friday, April 25, and chances meet big name actors and directors like "House of Cards" star Kevin Spacey via Tribeca Talks. It's all part of De Niro's long-term vision for the festival and its legacy.

"The nicest thing about it is that it could become something that is a part of the fabric of New York City for years to come and forever," De Niro says. "That would be a real contribution to the city."



January 21, 2014
Impressions: 164,832

"Games for Change" festival to be part of Tribeca Film Festival

In the clearest indication yet that video games are growing well beyond their roots as amusements built on coin boxes and hand-eye coordination, the 11th annual Games for Change (G4C) Festival this spring will take place as part of the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival, where it will host a family-friendly gaming arcade in lower Manhattan.



"For me it's a huge leap because it means that for the first time we're bringing Games for Change to the real person on the street," says Asi Burak, the games festival's president.

G4C is perhaps the biggest player in the growing "serious games" movement, which uses digital games and simulations for health, education, training and social change, among other uses. The festival last year produced *Half The Sky Movement: The Game*, a Facebook game based on *Half the Sky*, the 2009 book by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn about the worldwide oppression of women.

Craig Hatkoff, co-founder of the film festival, says Tribeca is paying attention to "the transformative power of gaming" that goes beyond traditional entertainment. He wants the combined event to bring together "the most cutting-edge creators of games, educators, and the world's greatest story-tellers." Hatkoff, along with his wife, the film producer Jane Rosenthal, and Robert DeNiro, founded the film festival in 2001, after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, to promote economic revitalization in lower Manhattan.

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April 14, 2014

Impressions: 164,222

Best Tech Events This Week — Tribeca Film Festival Innovation Week, Mobile Week, Data Driven, SendGrid

Apr 22 **Games for Change** [w/ Jane McGonigal](#), Noah Falstein (Google), Deborah Estrin (Cornell) **2 FREE Passes** (\$500 each!). Apr 24 **Global Innovator 4** Michael Rubenstein (President, AppNexus), Matt Turck (FirstMark) **2 Free Passes**.



April 7, 2014

Impressions: 164,222

Best Tech Events This Week — Tribeca Film Festival Innovation Week, Mobile Week, Data Driven, SendGrid

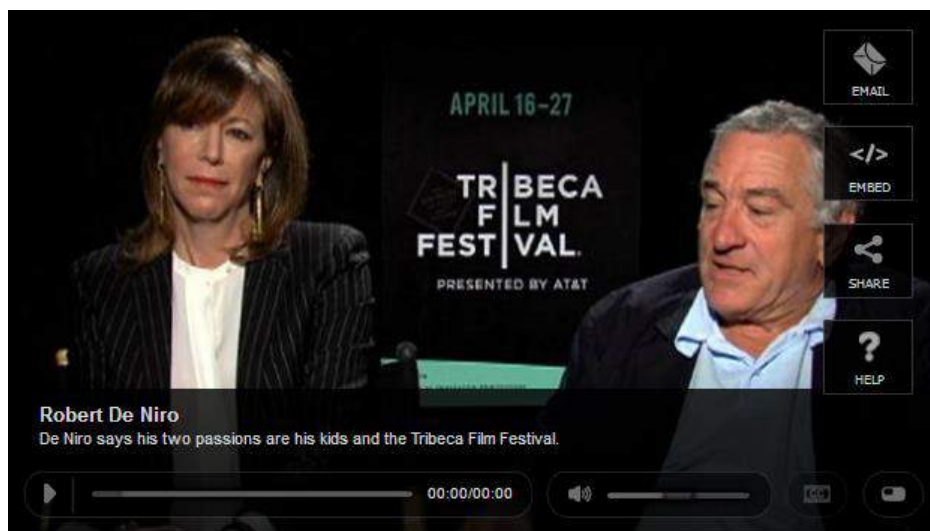
Apr 15 **SendGrid** [FREE event](#) to improve email deliverability, engagement & revenue. Apr 22 **Games** [for Change](#) w/ Jane McGonigal (Author), Noah Falstein (Google), Deborah Estrin (Cornell) [2 FREE Passes](#) (\$500 each!). Apr 30 **Equity** [Crowdfunding](#) (*What if Oculus Rift Kickstarter backers received equity?*)



April 16, 2014

Impressions: 148,098

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March 11, 2014

Impressions: 147,342

Beyond the Screen: Tribeca Film Festival Pushing Boundaries of Cinema

Who needs South by Southwest when you can just stay in New York? The Tribeca Film Festival (TIFF), in its 13th year, is continuing its march toward becoming one of the most futuristic, forward-thinking events in the industry, with a beefed-up transmedia and technology lineup. The festival, which starts April 16, has balanced its run of celebrity-studded narratives and award-winning docs with technology-focused “films” that emphasize audience interaction, music and immersive experiences.

If you didn’t think New York could be as hip as Austin, just take a look at the opener: a premiere screening of a Nas documentary, *Time Is Illmatic*, which explores the rapper’s seminal album 20 years after it was released. The Queens-born artist is expected to perform the album after the screening. In foregrounding music documentaries, TIFF seems to have found a successful formula. This will be the second year that it has opened with one: Last year, the band The National took to the stage for a live show after the festival premiered *Mistaken For Strangers*, a film about about lead singer Matt Berninger and his younger brother, Tom. *Illmatic* is just one of several documentaries this year that focus on musicians. Also on the lineup is *Super Duper Alice Cooper, Keep On Keepin’ On*, about 89-year-old jazz legend Clark Terry, and a documentary about the Grateful Dead’s co-founder Bob Weir called *The Other One*.

Tribeca has also teamed up with digital media company Interlude for a music film challenge for [Tribeca Interactive](#): Using the Treehouse app, competitors can create interactive music “films” for three tracks—“Heavy Seas of Love” by Damon Albarn, “Ticking Bomb” by Aloe Blacc or “Dead in the Water” by Ellie Goulding—and submit their entries online. The winning creators will receive \$10,000 each and a trip to attend TIFF, and their video will be shown at the festival.

And for the hackers among us, there is [Tribeca Innovation Week](#), a new program that overlaps with the second half of TIFF, April 21-26. Sponsored by AT&T, Innovation Week, which will be open to ticketed patrons, is being billed as an event to attract “coders, screenwriters, hackers, futurists, gamers, directors, engineers, venture capitalists, film financiers, techno radicals, the generally curious and anyone who has a story to tell.” Director Aaron Sorkin will be kicking off the inaugural talk, which is just as well—David Fincher and the *House of Cards* people, despite having a more digitally progressive platform than *The Newsroom*, would have been a bad fit, considering how they portrayed the telecommunication company co-sponsor as a metadata goldmine vulnerable to savvy hackers. “The arts are very scared of algorithms and hardware,” said Ingrid Kopp, the director of digital initiatives at the nonprofit Tribeca Film Institute. “That’s something we’re trying to change, to foster dialogue between the tech and artistic communities.” TIFF is also co-sponsoring Tribeca Hacks, a four-day

hackathon that will teach storytellers how to design working interactive art. And [Games for Change](#), New York's largest gaming event, will also be hosting its 11th annual event, which focuses on the social impact of the culture, as part of TIFF. It runs April 22-26 at the NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts. And in case we aren't sick of this term yet, the [Fifth Annual Tribeca Disruptive Innovation Awards](#) will be open to the paying public for the first time this year.



April 24, 2014
Impressions: 75,897

Games for Change festival names 2014 award winners

April 24, 2014 | By Christian Nutt

Games for Change held its 11th annual game awards last night as part of its yearly festival. According to the organization, "the annual awards are designed to celebrate excellence in the year's best games for social impact and learning."

The Fullbright Company's *Gone Home* took home the organization's Game of the Year award. Lucas Pope's *Papers, Please* picked up two awards: Most Innovative and Best Gameplay.

Mission US: Cheyenne Odyssey, an educational game in which the player takes on the role of a Native American boy, and which was developed by THIRTEEN, American Social History Project, and Electric Funstuff, took home the Most Significant Impact award.

The ceremony also honored educator and researcher James Paul Gee with its Game Changer Award for his significant work in games and education research.

The full list of nominees selected by the non-profit [is available at its website](#).



April 23, 2014
Impressions: 75,897

***That Dragon, Cancer* developer shares grace through game design**

April 23, 2014 | By Alex Wawro

Josh Larson is working with Ryan Green and others to develop *That Dragon, Cancer*, and he tapped that experience to give a talk today at the [Games for Change Festival](#) about the value of expressing concepts like grace through game design.

During his talk, which was broadcast on the Games For Change [Livestream page](#), Larson suggested that, by coding virtual game worlds, developers are responsible for pushing worldviews on the player.

"What players learn when they play our games says something about who we are as people," said Larson. "Playing a video game we create is like having a conversation with us — the player asks a question, and we provide an answer."

Larson went on to explain that the theme of *That Dragon, Cancer* is grace — the feeling that a moment is more meaningful than the sum of its parts. It's a feeling that fellow *That Dragon, Cancer* creators Ryan and Amy Green felt often while caring for their son Joel, who [passed away](#) recently at the age of five after a long battle with cancer.

Larson explained that *That Dragon, Cancer* includes chapters like "Dehydration" that attempt to convey the moments of grace Amy and Ryan Green experienced while caring for Joel. Larson specifically called out Ryan's experience of grace when Joel slipped into peaceful slumber as Ryan began praying for him, shortly after exhausting all other means of comforting his suffering son.

Playing through that experience during a recent demo event caused a complete stranger — an older man from a different age, a different faith and a different socio-economic background — to break down in tears, an experience Larson highlighted as an example of how game developers can -- and should -- affect others through mindful practice of their art.

Larson's talk should eventually be archived on the Games for Change [Livestream page](#), which will continue to broadcast talks from this year's [roster](#) of speakers -- including Jenova Chen, Jane McGonigal and more -- through the rest of the week.



April 7, 2014

Impressions: 75,897

Chris Crawford pitches game that may help put a ship on the moon

April 7, 2014 | By Alex Wawro

Game industry veteran Chris Crawford has been selected as one of the three finalists of the Games for Change Festival's [Shoot for the Moon](#) design challenge.

The contest challenged developers to make a game that could capture real-world data that might be useful to SpaceIL -- a nonprofit organization which seeks to land the first Israeli spacecraft on the Moon -- and drum up player interest in space exploration.

Crawford's pitch, titled [Rocket Science](#), appears to be a straightforward rocket design/launch simulator in the vein of *Kerbal Space Program* that can be played in a browser.

Rocket Science is the only prototype without a public demo -- the other two finalists, [Moon Rush](#) and [SpaceIL Academy](#), are playable right now. Both were developed in Unity -- the former by a student team at Ohio State University, the latter by indie studio Theorify.

The three finalists get two complimentary passes to the [Games for Change Festival](#) later this month in New York City, where they will present their concepts in front of a live audience and jury. The winner will receive a prize of up to \$25,000 to create a space exploration game that will log and submit data to SpaceIL, to aid it in its efforts to win Google's \$20 million [Lunar X Prize](#).



February 3, 2014
Impressions: 75,897

Jenova Chen, Jane McGonigal and more to speak at Games For Change Festival

February 13, 2014 | By Alex Wawro

Newsbrief: Games For Change Festival organizers [announced](#) today that notable industry professionals like Noah Falstein, Jenova Chen and Molleindustria founder Paolo Pedercini will be speaking at the Games for Change Festival in April.

Festival organizers have brought a pleasantly diverse mix of speakers to the festival in previous years, from Al Gore to Brenda Romero, and this year appears to be no different -- academic researchers like Zoran Popovic (who led the team that created biochemistry game [Foldit](#)) and innovative developers like Josh Larson (co-creator of [That Dragon, Cancer](#)) are equally represented on the festival's [list](#) of speakers.

The annual [Games For Change](#) festival, which aims to celebrate the positive ways that games can influence society, is scheduled to take place April 22-24 at the NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts in conjunction with the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival.



January 21, 2014

Impressions: 75,897

Games For Change joins forces with 2014 Tribeca Film Festival

January 21, 2014 | By Alex Wawro

The annual [Games For Change](#) festival, which has done a pretty solid job of celebrating the positive ways that games can influence society, is scheduled to take place April 22-24 at the NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts in conjunction with the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival.

This marks the first year that the feel-good gaming event, now in its 11th year, will take place as part of Tribeca's international film festival. Representatives on both sides of the partnership are casting it as an opportunity to broaden the discussion about artfully designed games can enact positive change.

"The new relationship with the Tribeca Film Festival is an incredible opportunity to reach a new audience for the 'games for good' sector," Asi Burak, president of Games for Change, stated in a press release about the event. "Games are often discussed in the context of entertainment, but with this event, we'll be able to share our message that this medium can be very powerful in creating positive change in the world."

As part of the partnership, the Games for Change Awards will be held at NYU -- the nominee list is expected to be announced in March. The Games For Change Arcade will still be made available to the public, though it will be part of the TFF Family Festival Street Fair on April 26.

Speaker lineups and talk schedules have not yet been announced for the event, though Games For Change has a [history](#) of pulling noteworthy keynote speakers like Al Gore, Brenda Romero, and Gamasutra's own editor-at-large Leigh Alexander.

Tickets are still available for the event via the Games for Change website, where you can also submit talk proposals, game demos and funding pitches until early February.



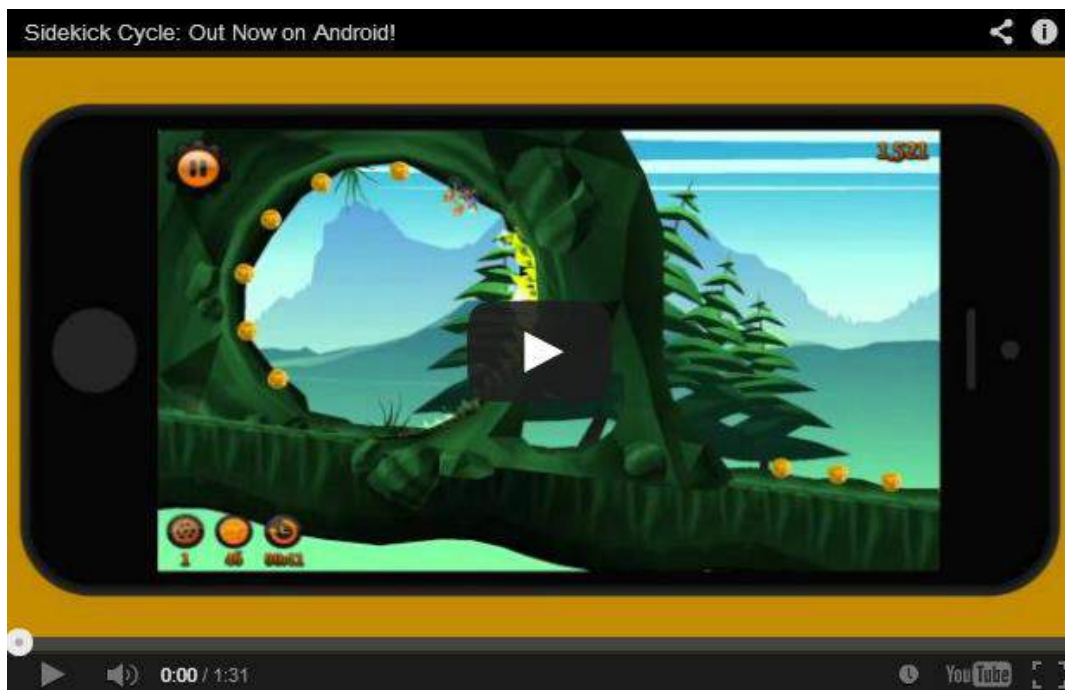
April 25, 2014

Impressions: 74,212

Remember 'Sidekick Cycle'? Turns Out They're Actually Giving Away Bikes

If you don't remember our [TA Plays video](#) from way back when on *Sidekick Cycle* [[Free](#)], here's the idea behind the game: The Global Gaming Initiative built *Sidekick Cycle* with the idea being a large portion of the money that the game earned would go directly to buying kids in need bikes.

Now, I think most of us fully expected the rest of the story to be something along the lines of how the game didn't do well, they didn't donate any bikes, and the whole thing sort of fell into obscurity, right? Turns out, that's not actually the case. They've given away over 100 bikes so far, and 40 are being given away at the [Games for Change Festival in NYC](#). Additionally, the game has even been updated with new stuff, *and* there's been a new trailer released:



Global Gaming Initiative has plans to release a bunch of other charity-centric games this year as well. While *Sidekick Cycle* hasn't necessarily been an insane success with thousands of bikes given away, it's still pretty cool that they've shown that this sort of things can work, and giving away a couple hundred bikes is way better than giving away no bikes.



April 15, 2014

Impressions: 74,008

Tribeca Film Festival 2014



Taking place between April 16th and April 27th in New York City, the Tribeca Film Festival can't boast of having as focused and concise of an identity as the New York Film Festival, nor does it want to. Speaking with [Indiewire](#) in 2011, Artistic Director Frédéric Boyer elaborated on the nature of the festival's overstuffed lineup, "It's not just about programming 85 films. It's about finding a current, an argument for why I want to show these films that I can explain to my programmers." For audiences, swimming that current can be daunting, though the rewards are often plenty.

With its proliferation of keynote speeches, panel discussions, and interactive activities, Tribeca continues to announce itself as not just another alternative to Sundance, but as a truly multimedia experience with the interests of younger audiences and DIY filmmakers on its increasingly relaxed mind. In 2011, for example, the festival explored the artistry of game design via a collaboration with Rockstar Games, which previewed its open-world title [L.A. Noire](#) as part of Tribeca Talks. And this year, as part of an alliance with the Games for Change Festival, which "facilitates the creation and distribution of social impact games that serve as powerful tools in humanitarian and educational efforts," patrons will be offered to chance to sit in on conversations with world-renowned speakers as they reveal how games are changing, and changing the world.

But back to the films. This year, the festival launches with the world premiere of the Nas documentary *Time Is Illmatic*, directed by multimedia artist One9, and closes with writer-director John Carney's *Begin Again*, a music industry-set dramedy starring Keira Knightley, Mark Ruffalo, and Hailee Steinfeld that's "set to the soundtrack of a summer in New York City." In between, audiences will get a

chance to sample carryovers from Sundance ([The One I Love](#)), Cannes ([Venus in Fur](#)), and beyond, all part of an ever-expanding lineup rich in films making their New York (*Honeymoon*, *The Overnighters*), North American (*Brides*, [Güeros](#)), and world (*Ballet 422*, *X/Y*, [Zero Motivation](#)) premieres. *Ed Gonzalez*

April 22, 2014

Impressions: 67,507

N.Y. Festival Highlights Growth of Video Games for Good

[*The New York Times*](#) reports on this week's Games for Change Festival, which spotlights the burgeoning development of video games designed to bring about social change as well as entertain players.

The festival is a project of the 10-year-old nonprofit organization Games for Change and is being held this year in partnership with the Tribeca Film Festival. It highlights projects such as Block by Block, a United Nations program that uses the popular game Minecraft for urban planning in countries affected by poverty or natural disasters, and NanoCrafter, which aims to discover molecular structures that could benefit medical research.

"Gaming is social, participatory, and has learning at its core," said Asi Burak, president of Games for Change. "These are powerful things for social impact, and it makes sense for us to take full advantage of it."

March 10, 2014

Impressions: 67,507

Nonprofits Should Use Online Games to Connect Viscerally With People

Front-page headlines announced the dramatic capture last month of the Mexican drug kingpin Joaquín Guzmán Loera, known as El Chapo, head of the vast and violent Sinaloa Cartel. But this was an exception. Outside of the occasional mass killing of Mexican victims or the isolated murder of an American tourist, Mexico's running war with drug traffickers rarely makes headlines in America.

But for reporters and editors in Mexico, the violence of the drug industry is a staple of their reporting, as chronicled in the gripping PBS documentary "Reportero."

The film follows the veteran journalist Sergio Haro and his colleagues at the weekly newspaper *Zeta*, and the attempted assassination of *Zeta's* founder.

"Reportero" was broadcast last year as part of PBS's POV documentary film series. But as powerful as the film was, POV wanted to help viewers appreciate the difficult choices faced by reporters and editors in a country where dozens of journalists have been slain or disappeared at the hands of drug traffickers.

Viewers were invited to take the Reportero Challenge, which asks the question, "Do you have what it takes to be a Mexican newspaper editor?"

The online interactive game developed by POV poses the daily dilemmas faced by journalists who have to balance their need to maintain credibility and increase circulation with the desire to maintain safety and security for reporters working in dangerous terrain.

The Reportero Challenge helps viewers engage more deeply in the issues and empathize more fully with the subjects introduced by the film.

This is just one example of a growing nexus of documentary films and the burgeoning field of interactive games. Such examples offer an important lesson for how foundations and nonprofits increasingly need to think about harnessing games to provoke serious thinking about social issues involving the environment, education, and other topics.

Documentary filmmakers have a special ability to harness audience interactions by blending their works with gaming efforts.

One of the largest such projects is the online game associated with another PBS documentary, "Half the Sky," a film about the role of women in the developing world that was created by the leading nonprofit gaming hub, Games for Change, with production assistance from one of the leading commercial gaming companies, Zynga.

Developed for Facebook, the online game from “Half the Sky” has reached over a million registered users.

The increasingly dynamic intersection of games and documentary films may become even more fertile this spring, when the annual Games for Change conference takes place for the first time in conjunction with the Tribeca Film Festival.

Gaming has rapidly eclipsed many other forms of communications, with some of the leading games taking in revenues exceeding the largest Hollywood blockbusters. It’s a \$66-billion industry in which one game alone, Grand Theft Auto, reaped more than \$1-billion in revenue within three days of its release.

I am not suggesting that the world is a better place because of the popularity of Grand Theft Auto. But just as nonprofits and foundations spend a lot of effort trying to influence Hollywood to include social messages in movies and television, it may be smart to think about gaming the same way.

Games developed for learning and other positive social purposes are growing quite rapidly, with funding from government agencies, for-profit businesses and investors, and a relative handful of foundations.

By the year 2012, global demand for game-based learning products rose to \$1.5-billion, and the market is projected to grow by more than 8 percent a year until 2017, when it is expected to reach \$2.3-billion.

So far, few large grant makers outside of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur and Bill & Melinda Gates foundations have made substantial commitments to promote gaming. But grant makers should appreciate that this type of media delivers particularly deep impact.

At Zynga, which makes the popular FarmVille game, the company estimates that 24 million people are now active players of FarmVille, and the game has been installed some 400 million times. **[Editor's note: The previous sentence has corrected an error that suggested Zynga made Candy Crush.]**

Most important for nonprofits, Zynga reports that 60 percent of FarmVille players have given to charity through FarmVille, donating \$7-million, and 32 percent said they learned about a new cause by playing the game.

For grant makers and media makers alike, the power of games may be the deeper engagement they deliver.

According to Ken Weber, executive director of Zynga.org, the nonprofit social-purpose arm of the game developer, game users spend an average of 40 minutes per session, versus 15 minutes per visit watching YouTube and just five minutes viewing a news site.

Online games will never replace the vital content created by documentary filmmakers, journalists, and other media creators.

But in some cases adding an online-game element may help deepen the impact of the content. And perhaps the next time you see a headline about the capture of a Mexican drug lord, you will have a deeper appreciation of what it took to get that story because you took the Reportero Challenge.

April 22, 2014

Impressions: 65,241

Video games for a better tomorrow



One video game immerses the player in the delicate ecosystem where ants struggle to survive. Another demonstrates how to navigate the complex public transit system of Colombia's capital. And a third challenges players to navigate hazards migrants face as they cross the U.S.-Mexico border.

These are just three games competing for awards in the annual [Games for Change Festival](#) in New York City. The annual fest, now in its 11th year, showcases video games that are designed to have a "social impact."

Here are the eight games competing in categories such as "most significant impact," "most innovative" and "best gameplay." The festival runs through Saturday, April 26.

Students control leafcutter ants as they struggle to survive in a delicate ecosystem. Players collect fresh green leaves — "the lifeblood of the colony" — as they control three ant castes: soldiers, foragers and miners.

TyrAnt

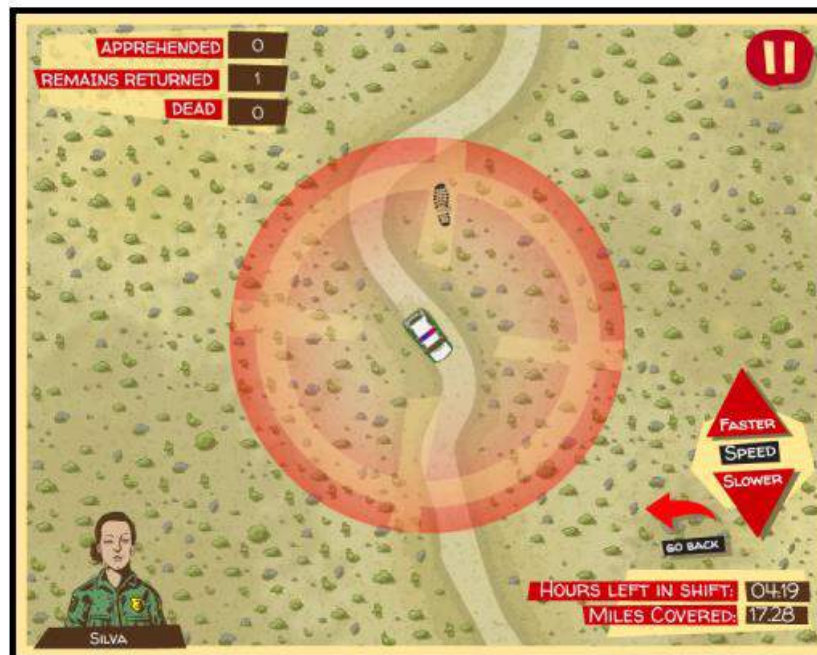


Papers, Please



Descriptions of "Papers, Please" read like a video game thriller — for good reason. As an immigration inspector in the fictional country of Arstotzka, the player is tasked with deciding who may or may not be entered or be arrested. [Check out the trailer.](#)

The Migrant Trail



"The Migrant Trail" is based on a documentary about the hazards that migrants face as they traverse the U.S.-Mexico border. Players can be migrants or patrol officers. [Play the game.](#)

Start The Talk



"Start the Talk" is aimed at sparking conversation between parents and their children about underage drinking. It was developed for the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. [Play it online.](#)

Mission US: A Cheyenne Odyssey



"It's 1866. You are Little Fox, a Northern Cheyenne boy. Can you help your tribe survive life on the Plains?" This is how players are introduced to "A Cheyenne Odyssey," a production of WNET, American Social History Project and Electric Funstuff. [Play it online.](#)



January 21, 2014

Impressions: 59,429

Games for Change Partnering with Tribeca Film Festival This Year



For the first time the annual [Games for Change Festival](#) is teaming up with the [Tribeca Film Festival](#) on April 22nd through the 24th of this year. The partnership offers Games for Change, a non-profit that promotes and analyzes games that make a notable social impact or statement within the medium, a chance to reach a significantly larger audience.

“The new relationship with the Tribeca Film Festival is an incredible opportunity to reach a new audience for the ‘games for good’ sector,” stated Games for Change President Asi Burak. “Games are often discussed in the context of entertainment, but with this event, we’ll be able to share our message that this medium can be very powerful in creating positive change in the world.”

The annual TFF began in 2001, with the help of actor/director Robert De Niro, and become one of the world’s largest events for industry professionals and film buffs. The festival has given nods to games in the past, such Rockstar’s *L.A. Noire* back in 2011, and more recently Quantum Dream’s *Beyond Two Souls* and Naughty Dog’s *The Last of Us*. Now with Games for Change linking to the TFF, tons of smaller and intelligent independent games have the opportunity to stand out as well.

Speaking to [Polygon](#), Burak points out that "in the past we saw those games being made by educators and non-profits. Now it's independent developers who have a voice and want to say something." Burak

named last year's *Paper's Please*, *Gone Home*, and *Cart Life* as examples of smaller titles with big messages.

The partnership between Games for Change and the TFF is another step in the right direction for games as a creative and artistic medium, something that TFF co-founder Craig Hatkoff clearly acknowledges and points out in today's [press release](#).

"Tribeca recognizes the transformative power of gaming that goes far beyond traditional entertainment value of games. The impact and integration has been spreading rapidly across virtually all domains. Of particular interest is how gaming has scaled to social good, from education to healthcare, and from conflict resolution to religion," states Hatkoff. "By partnering with Games for Change, we hope to bring together the most cutting-edge creators of games, educators, and the world's greatest story-tellers. Together, they will create the latest innovations in gaming for the social good to even wider audiences."

The 11th annual Games for Change Festival takes place from April 22nd to the 24th at the NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts, and includes the festival's fifth iteration of the Annual Games for Change Awards. Awards include "Most Significant Impact" and "Most Innovative." The Games for Game Festival is also making an appearance at the TFF Family Day in Tribeca on Saturday, the 26th, with its Games for Change Arcade.

For more information on the Games for Change Festival, including pricing and registration, head over to the festival's [official website](#).

TR|BECA

April 29, 2014

Impressions: 43, 393



Over 120, 000 movie lovers came out to celebrate our 13th Festival which was filled with special appearances from filmmakers, musicians, and sports icons to complement 12 days of screenings of exceptional shorts, documentaries and feature films.

The 2014 Tribeca Film Festival (TFF), co-founded by Robert De Niro, Jane Rosenthal and Craig Hatkoff and presented by [AT&T](#), is pleased to announce that more than 400,000 people attended screenings, panels, talks and free community events offered by the festival – including the [Tribeca Drive-In®](#) series, [Family Festival Street Fair](#), [Tribeca/ESPN Sports Day](#), as well as the first-ever [Tribeca Innovation Week](#) featuring the [Storyscapes](#) installation at the [BOMBAY SHAPPHIRE®](#) House of Imagination, the [Future of Film](#) series, [Games for Change](#), the [Tribeca Disruptive Innovation Awards](#), [Tribeca Hacks <Mobile>](#), and [TFI Interactive](#).

Even on a rainy Saturday afternoon, an estimated crowd of 275,000 enjoyed the signature Tribeca Family Festival Street Fair and Tribeca/ESPN Sports Day on April 26. This event included the Games for Change Public Arcade, the *Million Dollar Arm* pitching contest, and live performances from the casts of Broadway shows that included *Wicked*, *Rocky*, *Motown: The Musical*, and *Rock of Ages*.



February 13, 2014

Impressions: 43,393

HERE ARE THE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS AT THE 11TH ANNUAL GAMES FOR CHANGE FESTIVAL

The G4C Festival will feature a public game competition to benefit SpaceIL in Israel's mission to become the 4th nation to land spacecraft on the moon.

[Games for Change](#), a non-profit that catalyzes social impact through digital games, today announced its lineup of keynote speakers at its annual festival, taking place from April 22-24, 2014, at the NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts. Held as part of Tribeca Innovation Week at TFF 2014, presented by AT&T, the Games for Change Festival will also run the Games for Change Arcade. The Arcade will be open to the public at the TFF Family Festival Street Fair on Saturday, April 26.

In addition, the Festival will also hold a public game competition, sponsored by the Schusterman Family Foundation, to help the Israeli team SpaceIL land an unmanned spaceship on the moon and win the Google X Lunar Prize (\$40 Million in total prizes).

Games for Change is known for bringing together the brightest minds that are incorporating gaming into every aspect of life to advance society. Festival goers will get to experience presentations from these rock stars from the gaming world:

- **Jane McGonigal, PhD** is an award-winning game designer and New York Times' bestselling author of Reality is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World. McGonigal is a world-renowned designer of alternate reality games — or, games that are designed to improve real lives and solve real problems. She is the inventor and co-founder of SuperBetter, a game that has helped more than 250,000 players tackle real-life health challenges such as depression, anxiety, chronic pain, and traumatic brain injury. As the Director of Games Research & Development at the Institute for the Future, a non-profit research group in Palo Alto, California, McGonigal's research focuses on how games are transforming the way we lead our real lives, and how they can be used to increase our resilience and well-being. McGonigal has a PhD

from the University of California at Berkeley in performance studies, and has consulted and developed game workshops for more than a dozen Fortune 500 and Global 500 Companies, including Intel, Nike, Disney, Accenture, Microsoft, and Nintendo.

- **Jenova Chen** is the designer of the award-winning games Cloud, fLOW, Flower and Journey at thatgamecompany, an independent game studio recognized for creating timeless interactive entertainment that inspires and connects people worldwide. After earning a bachelor's degree for computer science in his hometown of Shanghai, Chen moved to Los Angeles, where he got a Master's Degree in the founding class of University of Southern California's Interactive Media and Games Division. Following graduation, he co-founded thatgamecompany with fellow graduates, where he remains its co-founder and Creative Director. Alongside thatgamecompany's critically-acclaimed reviews and multiple honors including the British Academy of Film and Television Arts Awards, D.I.C.E Awards and Game Developers Choice Awards, the studio's works have been featured in exhibitions across the world including the Museum of Modern Art in Manhattan and the Smithsonian. To date, Chen has been named one of Variety Magazine's "10 Innovators to Watch" and given the prestigious honor of being named to the MIT Technology Review Magazine's "World's Top Innovators under the Age of 35" list in 2008. Fast Company also profiled him as one of the "Most Creative Entrepreneurs in Business" in 2009 and 2010, in addition to being listed in their "Most Creative People in Business 1000" list in 2014.
- **Noah Falstein** has been developing games since 1980. Among the first ten employees at LucasArts Entertainment, The 3DO Company, and Dreamworks Interactive, he also ran his own design and production firm, The Inspiracy for 17 years. He has contributed to a wide range of entertainment and serious game titles, and has been a long-time supporter of Games for Change. Currently he is Chief Game Designer at Google, working in a new team at their Mountain View HQ.

There will also be keynote presentations by world's leading researchers who are harnessing gaming to advance their respective fields, like health, economics and education:

- **Dan Ariely, PhD** is dedicated to exploring questions about human behavior in order to help people live more sensible, if not rational, lives. In addition to appointments at the Fuqua School of Business, the Center for Cognitive Neuroscience, the Department of Economics, and the School of Medicine at Duke University, Ariely is also a founding member of the Center for Advanced Hindsight, and the author of The New York Times' bestsellers Predictably Irrational, The Upside of Irrationality, and The Honest Truth About Dishonesty.
- **Adam Gazzaley, PhD** obtained an M.D. and a Ph.D. in Neuroscience at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York, after completing clinical residency in Neurology at the University of Pennsylvania, and postdoctoral training in cognitive neuroscience at UC Berkeley. He is the founding director of the Neuroscience Imaging Center at the UC San Francisco, an Associate Professor in Neurology, Physiology and Psychiatry, and Principal Investigator of a cognitive neuroscience laboratory. His laboratory studies neural mechanisms of perception, attention and memory, with an emphasis on the impact of distraction and multitasking on these abilities. Dr. Gazzaley has authored over 80 scientific articles, and delivered over 300 invited presentations around the world. Recently, he wrote and hosted the nationally televised, PBS-sponsored special "The Distracted Mind with Dr. Adam Gazzaley." Awards and honors for his research include the Pfizer/AFAR Innovations in Aging Award, the Ellison Foundation New Scholar Award in Aging, and the Harold Brenner Pepinsky Early Career Award in Neurobehavioral Science.
- **Deborah Estrin, PhD** is a Professor of Computer Science at Cornell Tech in New York City and a Professor of Public Health at Weill Cornell Medical College. She is co-founder of the non-profit startup Open mHealth and was previously on faculty at UCLA and Founding Director of the NSF Center for Embedded Networked Sensing (CENS). Estrin is a pioneer in networked sensing, which uses mobile and wireless systems to collect and analyze real time data about the physical world and the people who occupy it. Estrin's current focus is on mobile health (mhealth), leveraging the programmability, proximity, and pervasiveness of mobile devices and the cloud for health management. She is an elected member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering.

- **Zoran Popovic, PhD** is an Associate Professor in computer science at University of Washington. He received a Sc.B. with Honors from Brown University, and M.S. and Ph.D in Computer Science from Carnegie Mellon University. Popovic's research interests lie in computer graphics and interactive games research, focusing on scientific discovery through game play, learning games, high-fidelity human modeling and animation, and control of realistic natural motion. He recently led the team that produced Foldit, a biochemistry game whose outcomes are now published in Nature. His contributions to the field of computer graphics have been recently recognized by a number of awards including the NSF CAREER Award, Alfred P. Sloan Fellowship, and ACM SIGGRAPH Significant New Researcher Award.

Additional speakers also include:

- **Paolo Pedercini** (Founder of *Molleindustria*)
- **Mary Flanagan** (Director of the *Tiltfactor Lab*)
- **Josh Larson** (Game designer, *That Dragon, Cancer*)
- **Dean Karlan** (World expert in developmental economics, Yale University)

The 11th Annual Games for Change Festival will also feature a public design challenge for an interactive game around the SpaceIL mission, sponsored by the Schusterman Family Foundation. The game will capture comprehensive real-world data that will enable Space IL, an Israel-based nonprofit organization that is a frontrunner in the Google Lunar X Prize, to land a spacecraft on the moon by 2015. The game will allow the SpaceIL team to learn about potential new designs and orbits from online players that were able to land a virtual spaceship in the game.

Three finalists will present their ideas on stage in front of attendees, potential funders, and a juried panel, and the winning team with the most innovative proposal will receive a grand prize of \$25,000. The winning team will have the opportunity to collaborate further with SpaceIL on their mission to the moon.

Tickets are currently on sale. For details on available ticket packages, including 20% discount offers if you register before February 28, visit tribecafilm.com/gamesforchange.



January 21, 2014

Impressions: 43,393

THE 11TH ANNUAL GAMES FOR CHANGE IS COMING TO TFF 2014

NYC's largest gaming festival, which encourages social impact through digital games, will take place April 22 - 26 at the Tribeca Film Festival.

Games for Change is coming to TFF! The 11th Annual [Games for Change Festival](#) will take place April 22nd through the 26th at the NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts and beyond, in conjunction with the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival presented by AT&T.

The Games for Change festival, hosted and created by the non-profit Games for Change, seeks to unite leading international game creators with others who believe in the positive social impact of digital games. The Games for Change Festival proves that video games can be fun and entertaining but also have the potential to spark positive change around the world. Past GFC speakers have included Vice President Al Gore and the Honorable Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

Games for Change Program Highlights for TFF 2014:

- Games for Change Showcase at the NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts running from April 22-24
- Annual Games for Change Awards (categories include Most Significant Impact, Most Innovative, Best Gameplay, and Game of the Year.)
- Games for Change Arcade at the TFF Family Festival Street Fair (free and open to the public this April 26!)

Tickets are currently on sale. For details on available ticket packages, including 20% discount offers if you register before February 28, visit tribecafilm.com/gamesforchange.

Go to the [Games for Change site](#) for more information about the 11th Annual Games for Change Festival, including the latest news on all programming, and submissions/pitches (open until Feb 5.)

About TFF and Games:

TFF supports storytelling in all forms in all media. Striving to recognize digital innovation, past TFF line-ups have featured the blockbuster crime game “L.A. Noire” in 2011 and the revolutionary gaming experience “Beyond: Two Souls” in 2013.



March 3, 2014

Impressions: 25,791

Israeli Moonshot: The Video Game

Schusterman Family Foundation funds \$25K prize for simulation that helps lunar team get off the ground.

As a public/private consortium in Israel prepares to send a robot to the moon next year, tech-savvy supporters can win \$25,000 for developing the best interactive simulations of the mission.

The Schusterman Family Foundation is putting up the prize money together with Games For Change to draw attention to SpacEL, Israel's team in the Google Lunar XPrize Challenge. The latter contest offers \$30 million in rewards for the first team to land a spacecraft on the moon, maneuver it and send back images, by the end of 2015.

The [Game Design Challenge](#), targeting people ages 15 to 25, was announced last month and entries are due by March 14. Developers must envision an experience that encourages people to learn about space exploration and captures "comprehensive real-world data that will inform the mission of SpacEL." The game does not need to be completed by the deadline, only conceptualized.

Kfir Damari, a co-founder of SpacEL, said the team benefits from the game contest in two ways. "First, it contributes to SpacEL's educational vision to inspire the next generation and promote STEM education, by offering a fun, practical way to learn more about space exploration," he told The Jewish Week in an email Tuesday. (STEM refers to instruction in science, technology, engineering and math.)

"Second, SpacEL can use the data collected from the game to optimize our landing strategy in our actual mission."

The Israeli team, funded mostly by private donations with a grant from the government-owned Israel Aerospace Industries, is hoping to crowd-source some ideas from the simulation about the fuel they will need to transport the spacecraft – about the size of a dishwasher – 238,000 miles to the lunar surface.

Three finalists will be selected to present their ideas at the Annual Games for Change Festival that begins April 22 at NYU's Skirball Center in Manhattan. It is attached to the Tribeca Film Festival. Games

For Change is a nonprofit that facilitates the creation and distribution of social impact games that serve as critical tools in humanitarian and educational efforts," according to the organization's website.

The Schusterman foundation supports innovative initiatives for "unleashing the power in young people to create positive change for themselves, the Jewish community and the broader world."

April 25, 2014

Impressions: 17,582

Theorify Wins \$25,000 at Game For Change Festival for 'SpaceIL Academy'



Developer Theorify was awarded a cool \$25,000 during the Games For Change Festival this week. The developer took the grand prize in the Shoot for the Moon game design challenge for its game, SpaceIL Academy.

The Shoot for the Moon game design challenged participants to create a space exploration game that would help Israeli non-profit organization SpaceIL team promote its goal of landing an unmanned spacecraft on the moon in 2015.

SpaceIL Academy is described as a massively multiplayer adventure game that puts players in the shoes of spaceflight trainees.

April 24, 2014

Impressions: 17,582

'Papers, Please' Wins Big at Games For Change Awards



Lucas Pope's popular indie game *Papers, Please* won the Most Innovative and Best Gameplay categories at the 11th Annual Games for Change Awards. The annual awards honors games that show creativity and aspire ideas. In *Papers, Please* players take on the role of an agent at a border crossing who is charged with approving or rejecting entry into their country.

The Fullbright Company's popular hit *Gone Home* won the Game of the Year category.

The Most Significant Impact award went to Electric Funstuff's *The Mission US: A Cheyenne Odyssey*. *Mission US*.

For more details on all this year's award winners and the Games For Change Festival, check out www.gamesforchange.org.

Congratulations to all of this year's winners!

February 13, 2014

Impressions: 17,582

Jane McGonigal, Jenova Chan, and More to Keynote 11th Annual Games For Change Festival



Organizers of the 11th annual [Games For Change Festival](#) announced today an impressive line-up of keynote speakers scheduled to appear during the event scheduled to take place in New York City April 22 - 24 at the NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts. Last month organizers announced that this year's event will run in tandem with the prestigious Tribeca Film Festival. Headlining the Games For Change Festival will be academics, authors, researchers, and award-winning game designers.

The list of keynote speakers includes Jane McGonigal, PhD, an award-winning game designer, Director of Games Research & Development at the Institute for the Future, author of the New York Times' bestselling book, "Reality is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World," and co-founder of SuperBetter, a game that has helped more than 250,000 players tackle real-life health challenges such as depression, anxiety, chronic pain, and traumatic brain injury; legendary indie developer Jenova Chan, who was the chief designer of such hit games as Cloud, fLOW, Flower, and Journey while at thatgamecompany; and games industry veteran Noah Falstein, who is currently serving as Chief Game Designer at Google.

Other speakers who will be delivering tailored presentations at this year's event include Dan Ariely, PhD, a founding member of the Center for Advanced Hindsight, and the author of The New York Times' bestsellers "Predictably Irrational, The Upside of Irrationality," and "The Honest Truth About Dishonesty"; Adam Gazzaley, PhD, founding director of the Neuroscience Imaging Center at the UC San Francisco, an Associate Professor in Neurology, Physiology and Psychiatry, a Principal Investigator of a cognitive neuroscience laboratory - and most recently, writer and host of the nationally televised PBS-sponsored special "The Distracted Mind with Dr. Adam Gazzaley; Deborah Estrin, PhD, a Professor of Computer Science at Cornell Tech in New York City, Professor of Public Health at Weill Cornell Medical College, and co-founder of the non-profit startup Open mHealth; and Zoran Popovic, PhD, an Associate Professor in computer science at University of Washington. and a principle in creating and producing the biochemistry game Foldit.

Other speakers scheduled to appear include Molleindustria founder Paolo Pedercini, Tiltfactor Lab director Mary Flanagan, "That Dragon, Cancer" designer Josh Larson, and Dean Karlan, World expert in developmental economics at Yale University.

This year's Games for Change Festival will also feature a public design challenge for an interactive game related to the SpaceIL mission, sponsored by the Schusterman Family Foundation. Designers are

challenged to create a game that captures "comprehensive real-world data that will enable Space IL, an Israel-based nonprofit organization that is a frontrunner in the Google Lunar X Prize, to land a spacecraft on the moon by 2015."

Since the most crucial part in designing a spacecraft is apparently the fuel used to transport the small rocket to the moon, the game needs to be able to teach the SpaceIL team about "potential new designs and orbits from online players that were able to land a virtual spaceship in the game." Three finalists will present their ideas on stage in front of attendees, potential funders, and a juried panel, with the winning team receiving a grand prize of \$25,000. The winning team will also have the opportunity to collaborate further with SpaceIL on their mission to the moon.

The Games For Change Festival is part of the Tribeca Innovation Week, which offers passes and single event tickets to a variety of different events and activities related to film, creativity, technology, and gaming.

The event will run daily from 9:00 a.m. - 6:30 p.m. EST, with an opening night party on April 22. Tickets are currently on sale online at www.tribecafilm.com/gamesforchange.

For more details on all the activities at this year's event, including more details on all of this year's scheduled speakers, check out gamesforchange.org/festival.



January 22, 2014

Impressions: 17,582

Games For Change Festival Teams Up With The Tribeca Film Festival

This year's Games For Change Festival (April 22-24 at the NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts) will be held in conjunction with the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival. In case you didn't know, the games For Change Festival is an annual celebration of games that influence society in positive and unique ways.

"The new relationship with the Tribeca Film Festival is an incredible opportunity to reach a new audience for the 'games for good' sector," Asi Burak, president of Games for Change, stated in a press release about the event. "Games are often discussed in the context of entertainment, but with this event, we'll be able to share our message that this medium can be very powerful in creating positive change in the world."

As part of this special partnership, the Games for Change Awards will be held at NYU. The Games For Change Arcade will still be made available to the public, though it will be part of the TFF Family Festival Street Fair on April 26.

Tickets are still available for the event via the [Games for Change website](#).



April 30, 2014

Jane McGonigal and Games for Change in 2024

SOCIAL GOOD GAMES THAT WE WILL PLAY IN 10 YEARS

Jane McGonigal ([@avantgame](#)) is a world-renowned designer of alternate reality games aimed at improving people's lives and solving real problems. She is an inventor, researcher and author of the New York Times bestseller [Reality is Broken](#).

Jane is also a future forecaster. She is the Director of Games Research & Development at the [Institute for the Future](#), a non-profit research group in Palo Alto, California. She can be seen in-person and on stage at our upcoming [GSummit in San Francisco](#) this June 10-13.



Jane currently serves on the Board of Directors for [Games for Change \(@G4C\)](#), and on April 22 she was invited to open the [11th annual Games For Change Festival](#) in New York to speak on **what the social good organization will be celebrating 10 years from now**. Her [future research](#) focuses on how games are transforming the way we lead our real lives, and how they can be used to increase our resilience and well-being. To date, her future forecasting work has been featured in *The Economist*, *Vanity Fair*, *The New Yorker*, *O(rah) Magazine*, *Fast Company*, *The New York Times Science*

section, and more.

Jane's #1 goal in life is to see a game designer win a Nobel Peace Prize, which, she predicts, will happen by 2023. While in 2014 it is still perceived as [a \(crazy\) job of the future](#), Jane knows what she is talking about, having created and deployed award-winning [games, sports and secret missions](#) in more than 30 countries on six continents for partners such as the American Heart Association, the International Olympics Committee, the World Bank Institute, and the New York Public Library. Jane specializes in games that challenge players to tackle real-world problems, such as poverty, hunger and climate change. Her best-known work includes *EVOKE*, *Superstruct*, *World Without Oil*, *Cruel 2 B Kind*, *Find the Future*, and *The Lost Ring*.

Jane invites us to think about the best social good games of the future as blockbuster engaging experiences that blend known and emerging technologies and trends to create truly global and life-changing impact.

Future with a Taste of Jelly Beans

Jane believes game designers are on a humanitarian mission, and, in 10 years' time, much of what is new and innovative today will change the core of the most basic and popular rituals and traditions we have to for a more fulfilling and successful life.

Jane calls these emerging trends and technologies, which she thinks will be part of our future, "*signals*" – and makes an analogy with jelly beans that, when eaten in certain combinations, create a completely new flavor. She invites us to think about the future in a similar way – combining *signals* like jelly beans to come up with the potential overall *taste*.

While game designers are not (yet) celebrated like movie stars, Jane presents her own (Oscar) nominees for the Games of Change 2024 Awards based on what signals – or jelly beans – are all the rage in 2014. For example, Jane predicts that the success of [save-to-win](#) savings accounts and the psychology of [dopamine priming](#) will come together in a vision where governments gamify the well-known state lotteries and donate the remainder of the prize to fight income inequality.

Jane also acknowledges the huge interest that 3D printing is currently generating, as well as the [Oculus Rift](#). In her view of the future, 3D printers could make healthy food, and the Oculus Rift experience would affect our perception of it. In that way, our brain could be fooled into thinking that we're eating a cake while in reality it could be a protein mix. The perception alteration signal can be developed much further – to empathy-building virtual reality games. Jane quotes an experiment where people decreased their meat consumption after having experienced a *cow's life* through a cow simulator in the virtual reality. This could have a potentially huge impact on our attitude towards animals and diets. Another possibility for using the Oculus Rift signal is to *democratize the memoir*. A person could experience another person's life through the Oculus Rift experience, and write about them without having to interview them or even meet in person!

Jane also hopes we will be healthier and more active in the future, driven by the wave of personal fitness trackers like [Nike+](#) and Google Glass. However, many of them are abandoned within the [first 6 months](#). While the aim of wearables is to make us healthier, we rely on them to keep us engaged over time – something that game creators like [Zombies, Run!](#) and other augmented reality game developers understand. What might be lacking, as suggested by Jane, is team effort. Many people watch team

sports, many purchase branded T-shirts and gear, and spend a lot of time and money overall on following and cheering for their team. When faced with these jelly bean signals, Jane suggests that Nike+ could reinvent professional sports like the NFL by allowing people to influence their real-life teams through collective exercise. If, say, NY Giants fans got together and ran a certain amount of miles, they could then enhance their team's performance in the game – be it real or virtual like [Madden NFL](#).

The last jelly bean flavor – and flavor that won the hearts of the Games for Change audience in a nomination vote – is Jane's own fictional Socrates 2.0 education platform. College students today get into massive debt over education that no-one can put a real-life value on. She mentions research that suggests for-profit colleges lead to defaults on student loans. At the same time we see a tremendous interest in [gamification in the classroom and game-based learning](#). Initiatives are popping up worldwide when teachers see traditional education methods fail to engage students. Socrates 2.0 is an online education platform that would crowdsource education much like [Wikistrat](#) crowdsources [consulting](#). A student would be matched with a mentor for every subject she takes, and guided through both educational material *and* its application in real life by sending the student to local meetup groups, companies and professional organizations. We can also imagine referring the student to additional learning materials that would not be forgotten on the last page of course syllabus, but would make the student search for the necessary resources in libraries, government institutions, etc. In essence, Socrates 2.0 would teach a student **how to learn** throughout their lives, instead of cramming short-term facts and, most importantly, expose her to the current situation in her area of studies.

Fail break

Finally, Jane asks you to suggest the overall jelly bean 'flavor' for the following signals that many people like, but she has not come up with a social good game for. **Is there a social game *flavor* for the following signals?**

- LED light installations on buildings that could entertain people around the world for holidays and big events like the [Super Bowl](#);
- World's biggest crowdsourced Pokemon game in [Twitch](#);
- [Tetris game](#) on a Philadelphia building.



April 29, 2014

Games for Change's Asi Burak: The BlipTalk Interview

Saturday, April 26 – Between Greenwich and Jay St. in Brooklyn, NY, the Tribeca film Festival hosted Games For Change, a collaborative effort to showcase new games which are pushing the boundaries by trying to educate and incorporate lasting change in the world.

We at BlipTalk were fortunate enough to sit down with Asi Burak, president of Games For Change, and pick his brain about how the festival and gaming have changed over time.

BlipTalk: [Games For Change](#) has been going on for 10 years now and you've been it's president. What made you want to get involved with this project in the first place?

Burak: I think it's because I started as a game developer, that's my background. There's something very powerful in moving to a position where you can help many other people create and help a lot of other developers get funding and get exposure and get audiences for what they do. There is something interesting from that perspective, to come from making games to helping showcase them.



BlipTalk: Being a developer, one can only imagine that you're around a ton of games, especially when leading events like this. What kinds of games do you like to play?

Burak: I play all kinds of games. I'm definitely playing a lot of console games. I want to stay current on the latest technology, but I also play a lot of innovative things on the iPhone and on the Web, and I even

check Facebook. But I'm looking for something unique. I have two kids now so I don't have much time, so when I do play I'm looking for the best of the best.

BlipTalk: It's interesting that you said you are looking for unique games. You were a producer on *Peace Maker* and when that game came out there was nothing like it at the time. What was your inspiration for making a game like that?

Burak: I think it's very interesting because I never developed video games before that. It was ten years ago when I started and I came to Carnegie Mellon in the U.S. and I saw a very interesting situation where you have this amazingly powerful medium that is just getting stronger, and I can say after a reflection of ten years from then, that it's only stronger and faster than I imagine, and it's only you being perceived in a very narrow way. I looked at other things happening in other media, the comic book industry, and what filmmakers are doing, and I said *"let's test the boundaries."* *Peace Maker* was actually an experiment, to go do something that was arguably one of the most serious, complex topics you could imagine. People didn't think we could do it, there was a lot of rejection at first. *"It doesn't make any sense. How are you going to succeed? It's too ambitious. How is this going to be any fun?"* So even things like that we tried to challenge – why does it have to be fun? Why can't the game just be engaging and immersive and thought-provoking?



BlipTalk: It's funny that you say that because engaging, immersive, thought-provoking, these are things that lead to a game being fun. For example, people who play *Dark Souls* don't play it because it's easy. They play it because it's hard and they love it.

Burak: I always give the example of chess: non-digital. I played chess a lot in my youth and it was frustrating – it was a very, very difficult game. It's the type of game that doesn't leave you after you play, it taunts you, you dream about it, so I completely agree with you. This year, the festival, I think it's the first time that it gave me the same feeling that I had with *Peace Maker* where it was really

thoughtful, really engaging, really related to the reward, and even the mechanics are really aligned with what it's trying to say. So to see a young generation continuing this work and to see them exceeding what we have achieved to the point that some of these games have sold over 500,000 copies so it's even financially successful, is amazing.

BlipTalk: if you were to get back into game development, what kind of games do you think you'd be developing now?

Burak: We did *Half The Sky* recently and with that, we tested the idea, "*Can we bring the biggest brands together? Can we bring Zynga? Can we bring NGO's that are the loudest in the world for support?*" So for the next time, I'd say maybe we work on the Oculus Rift, let's see what we can do with the latest technology. I think, at least from my point of view, that there always needs to be that sense of experimentation.

BlipTalk: As far as pushing boundaries and experimentation, what games at the festival are you really excited about?

Burak: I think that what the Museum of Natural History is doing is super provocative because they have the audience (*Editor's Note: Burak is referring to the [Pterosaur card game](#)*). If you think about it, that museum has millions of people walking through, and the concept is unique because the people don't come to learn necessarily, but they understand that there is a learning avenue. So I think that what they are doing with their exhibitions and some of the products they started selling are super interesting. I also love games like FarmVille and the global gaming initiative that are introducing real world data.

BlipTalk: As far as promoting education and cultural awareness, what made you want to use games as your medium, as opposed to more traditional means of education?

Burak: If you think about it, it makes a lot of sense, the medium is interactive, were as with traditional methods, which are mostly passive, you are listening to a lecture, or watching a movie, or reading. Here you are making decisions, there are consequences to your actions and winning a game requires learning how it works, learning it's rules. Ask a kid if he would rather learn math by playing a fun game, or by reading from a book.

BlipTalk: This is more of a personal question, but how does it feel to be able to work with TriBeCa film festival and having a street to yourself with all the games on display?



Burak: Unbelievable. I mean, we never had an idea of what it would look like, that was just something we never did. But being here and seeing it, watching the kids come in with their parents and checking it out and discovering it – I mean, if you think about it, when we do the conference, we're talking to people who bought a ticket because they already care. Here, for the first time, we are speaking to people who may not have necessarily heard about games of this type. Their perception of

games is sometimes slanted and we are educating the public and giving them an opportunity to see a different type of creation.

BlipTalk: Would you say the turnout for the past week and especially today is what you expected or are you surprised by how many people are here?

Burak: I'd say that this is what we'd hoped for. This is the first time we've worked with the TriBeCa film festival so there were high stakes and we wanted to do the best we could. It was a very aggressive plan with the three days of conference plus the public display and we couldn't be happier. Things went very smoothly and people get it. I was expecting a lot more questions about why we were collaborating, but people just seemed to get it – it made perfect sense to them.



BlipTalk: You have children yourself. What kinds of games do you let them play?

Burak: My kids are two and a half and five so they play a lot of iPad and iPhone games, not so much on the Web, but it's getting to the point that my wife is starting hide the iPad from them, so sometimes I have to go get it from a closet or something. They play it all by themselves too. They found the App Store, they figure out the games on their own. The only thing they don't have is the password so they have to come to me to buy the games.

BlipTalk: This year has been a huge success for Games For Change. Where do you see it going in the next ten years?

Burak: There are so many different directions it can go. I think the idea that we can incubate games and fund developers is fun, but I think that one of the top issues that we face is distribution. Today, we are on the street and that's amazing, but we can't do this everyday. So how do the parents, how do the kids and the young adults find Games for Change? Where is that place? I think that the answer is rather than make something new, to find a channel that already has the focus of the people, be it Google, Amazon, or another platform.



April 26, 2014

Review Fix Exclusive: Games for Change Public Day Today

The 11th Annual Games for Change Festival, in collaboration with Tribeca Film Festival, was held earlier this week in the New York University Skirball Center for the Performing Arts. but don't fear, if you couldn't attend, there's still a chance; for the first time ever the G4C Festival will hold a public day, today, from 10 a.m to 6 p.m. ET.

"[This year], we're breaking out of the conference hall and into the street," Asi Burak, president of Games for Change told Review Fix. "So Tribeca is doing every year what they call the Family Street Day, which is huge — 30,000 people throughout the day. It's April 26, on Saturday, and they have ESPN activities, they have a screening, arts and crafts and for the first time this year they're going to have games on the street.

"So we succeeded in bringing some great brands like the American Museum of Natural History [and] [Zynga](#), the creators of "Farmville," they're going to build a life-sized farm on the street for the kids, so it's mainly parents and kids but for us it's a huge move to be much more public facing in Games for Change because I think that in terms of public perception we have a lot of work to do in terms of people understanding that games are very diverse."



The G4C Festival is the largest [gaming](#) event in New York City, with a focus on how digital games can impact society.

“At the core of [G4C] is the idea that people can use games beyond entertainment. Use, play, make. And beyond entertainment means that you have a purpose. Games in our community, mainly the purpose is either humanitarian causes or educational causes,” Burak said. “It’s games for the social good and to advance a problem, to raise awareness, to promote something, sometimes to even change behavior. It became a very diverse spectrum, because we have people making games for kids, something you would expect, but we have people making games for seniors to deal with problems that seniors have. The range is becoming very interesting. Just like you would have with movies or books, it’s a very interesting shift that I’ve seen in the last few years.”

April 25, 2014

How Video Games Create Social Change

Video games no longer *only* entertain us. Innovative nonprofits like [Games for Change](#) now use video games to create social change. The New York City-based organization was founded in 2004 by Asi Burak, a former Israeli Defense Forces captain. Burak and his small team created the video game [PeaceMaker](#) in 2005, which simulates the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Players make decisions based on real-life events that effect the social, political, and military dynamics for both countries. Helping people empathize with *both* viewpoints was Burak's motivation to create PeaceMaker.



Asi Burak, Founder and President of Games for Change.

Games for Change Festival

The idea video games can create social change caught momentum within the past 10 years. Some credit belongs to Burak. Since 2004, Burak hosted the Games for Change Festival – described as “New York City’s largest gaming event.” Thousands of social change makers, behavioral scientists, video game designers and enthusiasts convene around the idea video games offer society a greater role than pure entertainment.

This April the Games for Change Festival teamed up with the Tribeca Film Festival; an exhibition traditionally associated with international and domestic film. But as the film industry evolves, appreciation has increased for video games as a medium for more than entertainment. Exploding popularity for video games designed with a social impact mission proves this.



Jane McGonigal speaks at the Game for Change Festival in 2010. Oprah Magazine listed Jane as one of the top 20 most important women of 2010. She is currently the Chief Creative Officer for the popular social impact game SuperBetter.

Social Impact Gaming Soars In Popularity

In 2013, the game Half Sky Movement: The Game went live via Facebook. 1.25 million Half Sky Movement players see their virtual actions translate into real-world impact. Collecting 250,000 books in the game unlocks a donation of real books to Room to Read, a nonprofit designed to improve literacy and gender equality in developing countries.



An Oculus user gets immersed into the virtual world. In August 2012, Oculus VR used Kickstarter to raise \$250,000. They reached the goal in hours. Two days later Oculus raised \$1 million.

Last month, Facebook purchased Oculus for \$2 billion. Oculus makes virtual-reality goggles and places users inside virtual worlds with the ability to interact in real-time 3-D. Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg says after mobile, virtual reality is the next big thing.

Takeaways

The emergence of video games -once thought as mere entertainment – as

potential resources for social impact presents an opportunity for assessment. Can you look at the resources you possess and consider ways they could be re-purposed to create social change?

The social change leaders and organizations who will thrive in today's competitive landscape for resources will successfully use innovation to create larger and more sustainable impact.



April 25, 2014

Games for Change 2014 Grows In Popularity

SERIOUS ABOUT GAMES YET?

It all started in June 2004. This was the very first [Games for Change Festival](#) ever, it was held at New York Academy of Sciences in New York City. The goal? To investigate whether or not games could become [serious games](#), ones that could be used for educational purposes and to inspire social change. Unfortunately only forty-two people attended...

However, this year's Games for Change Festival will prove just how strong this movement has become. It has been projected that more than 800 people have attended in-person and an additional 10,000 people will have attended the event through streaming this past week. The festival also nabbed a great ally in their quest for social good by partnering with the [Tribeca Film Festival](#) for this year's event.

Benjamin Stokes, a co-founder for the event admitted the original small festival was a very intimate and productive one, however is very happy to see how awareness has grown in recent years.

The big movement in support of serious games and their benefits is thanks in part to the increase of social media and different devices that people use to access the internet. Thanks to the iPhone, tablets, and websites like Facebook, more and more people are being exposed to games of all sorts. People who never used to play games are now finding themselves curious to see what all the fuss is about.

Despite starting small, this festival has definitely grown throughout the years. This is evident if for no other reason than the different keynote speakers who have been taking part. For example, Sandra Day O'Connor (retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice) was a keynote speaker. She took part in overseeing the game [iCivics](#) (a web-based educational game twchich teaches students about civics). Another notable keynote speaker was Al Gore who mentioned in his speech that "games are the new norm".

The shift in society to not only accepting games but embracing them as viable teaching resources shows how far this technology has come since this festival initially started. Web-based games and skill based games have been integrated into many areas of education and businesses. This includes simulated training games and even promoting customer loyalty by using gamification.

Another reason why gaming is growing in popularity is that many of the original gamers are now in their 20s and 30s. They are voting, they are heads of houses, they are raising children. Rather than the idea that games are foolish or a waste of time. There has been more support in favor of games, citing mental stimulation.

Further proof that serious games are being more widely recognized? Electronic Arts has recently partnered with Pearson (an educational publisher), among other companies, to release educational games. One example is an educational version of the very popular SimCity game.

The battle for serious games isn't over though. Just because more and more people are realizing the usefulness of these games, doesn't mean that they are be utilized to their full potential. This article claims that only 1 out of every 5 serious or educational games actually end up in the classroom.

Looking to the future we need to not only develop new games and technologies, but also discover ways to make them more accessible to educators and schools. It would be a shame to let such a great resource go to waste.



April 25, 2014

Gone Home takes out Games for Change's GOTY award, honours given to *Papers, Please*



The Games for Change not-for-profit organisation, which is dedicated to using “entertainment and engagement for social good”, [held their 11th annual awards gala very recently](#). Designed to “celebrate excellence” in the areas of learning and “social impact”, it was always a given that the one of the stellar indies from last year would get the major gong, and, surprise surprise, *Gone Home* has walked away with the Game of the Year Award.

The lesser, but still worthwhile, categories were taken out by the dystopian *Papers, Please* and *Mission US: Cheyenne Odyssey*, an educational title focused on the life of a Native American boy. *Mission US* won the Most Significant Impact award over *The Migrant Trail* and *Start the Talk: Underage Drinking*, while *Papers, Please* took out the Best Gameplay and Most Innovative awards over a group of games that included *Gone Home*.

I can't remember a year quite like last where indie titles received such a critical mass of support from the media, even to the point where many gamers begrudgingly hopped on the bandwagon. Nevertheless, it all adds up to one thing: more developers willing to try their hand at providing different and unique experiences, which just results in a lot more interesting and quirky games for us to enjoy.



April 25, 2014

UPDATE W/ WINNERS- GAMES FOR CHANGE 2014 NOMINEES ANNOUNCED



Update: The Winners of the Games for change Awards were announced on the 23rd. Those were

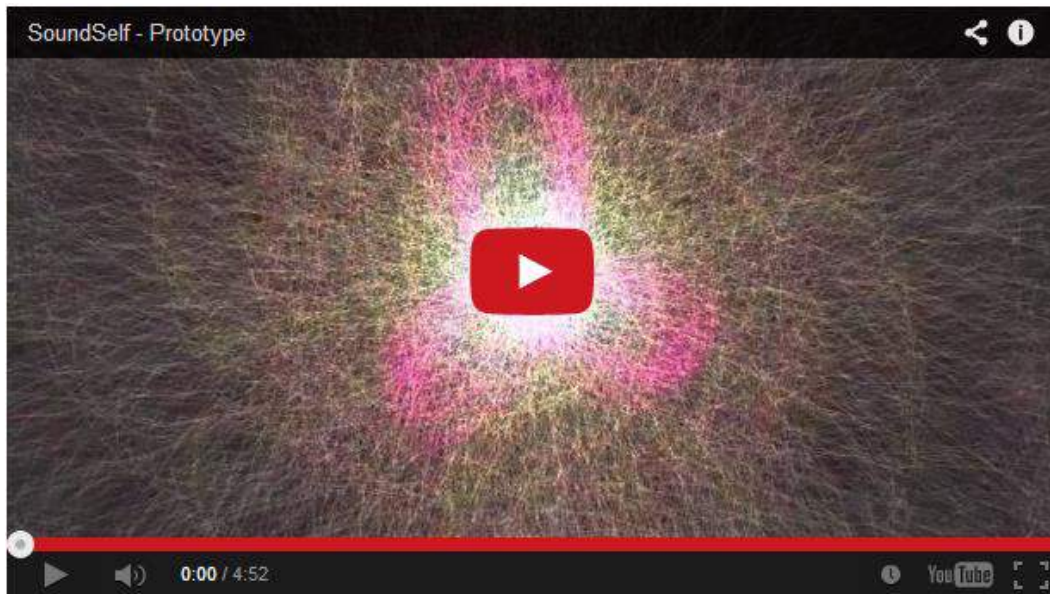
- Game of the Year – Fullbright’s company’s **Gone Home**
- Most innovative game & Best Gameplay – Lucas Pope’s **Papers, please**
- Most significant Impact game: THIRTEEN’s **Mission US: Cheyenne Odyssey**

Games for Change is a nonprofit corporation created in 2004 with the objective of helping to create games and entertainment that can be seen as tools for educational and humanitarian efforts. They offer a range of services for clients but also have a [open resource center](#) on their website for game developers and a review area where everyone can sign in and [speak about games](#) that fit their statement. Games for Change also organizes a festival, and this year’s will be in partnership with the Tribeca Film Festival, with multiple workshops, talks and other activities to take place [between the 22 and the 26 of April](#). In between those activities, they will give their Games For Change awards on the 23rd. The nominees are:

MOST INNOVATIVE GAME

These games best exemplify the use of creativity and technical experimentation in a manner that may pave new ways for games for change.

- **SoundSelf** (Robin Arnott / Platform: Mac, PC, Oculus Rift): Designed for the next generation of Virtual Reality, SoundSelf takes advantages of loopholes in human perception to induce an introspective state of ecstasy. It is as much for the experienced desert wanderer as it is for the intrepid novice taking their first steps into alternative experiences of self.



- **Papers, Please** (Lucas Pope / Platform: Mac, PC): One of the indie games of the year. players take the daunting role of an immigration inspector for the fictional communist state of Arstotzka. You must decide who can enter and who will be turned away or arrested.



- **Subete al SITP** (12 Hit Combo! / Platform: Android, iOS, Web): *Subete al SITP* is a game created to fill a real world need: help the citizens of Bogotá understand better the intricacies of their new Integrated Public Transport System (SITP)



MOST SIGNIFICANT IMPACT GAME

- [Mission US: A Cheyenne Odyssey](#) (THIRTEEN, American Social History Project, and Electric Funstuff / Platform: Mac, PC, Web): the first interactive project told from a Northern Cheyenne perspective, players must react to the encroachment of settlers, expansion of railroads, decline of buffalo, and rise of the reservation system in the 1860s and 1870s.



- [Start the Talk: Underage Drinking](#) (Kognito / Platform: Android, iOS, Web): This roleplaying game helps parents build practical skills and confidence to talk with their child about underage drinking in real life. (couldn't find a video, but the game is playable on the link.)

- **The Migrant Trail** (Gigantic Mechanic / Platform: Web): Part of *The Undocumented* documentary, this game allows you to experience the hardships and perils of crossing the Sonora Desert. Players have the chance to play as both migrants crossing the desert from Mexico to the United States and as U.S. Border Patrol agents patrolling the desert. (Again, no video available but the game is fully playable on the provided link.)

BEST GAMEPLAY GAME

- **Gone Home** (The Fullbright Company / Platform: Mac, PC): Another of last year's indie darlings, in this game you arrive from your European trip back home, but there is no one there. Where is everybody and what have happened in your absence?

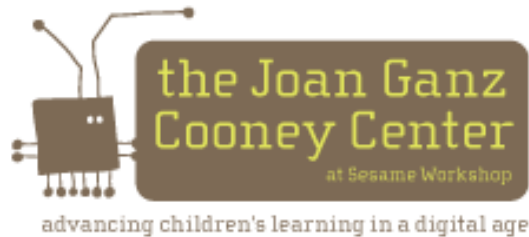


- **TyrAnt** (Preloaded / Platform: Android, iOS (Tablet & Smartphone)): TyrAnt is a real-time strategy game that teaches the player how ants eat, communicate and, ultimately, reproduce within a delicate and biologically diverse ecosystem. It is among the first of the learning games rolled out to a number of US schools as part of Amplify's pilot program.



- [Papers, Please](#) (Lucas Pope / Platform: Mac, PC) See above

The behavioral change capabilities of the games is largely unexplored, as it's their educational possibilities that normally are strapped into educational games that are pretty dull affairs). So having this kind of awards is always an interesting diversion from the usual videogame awards.



April 24, 2014

Winners of the 2013 National STEM Video Game Challenge Honored at the 11th Annual Games for Changes Festival in New York

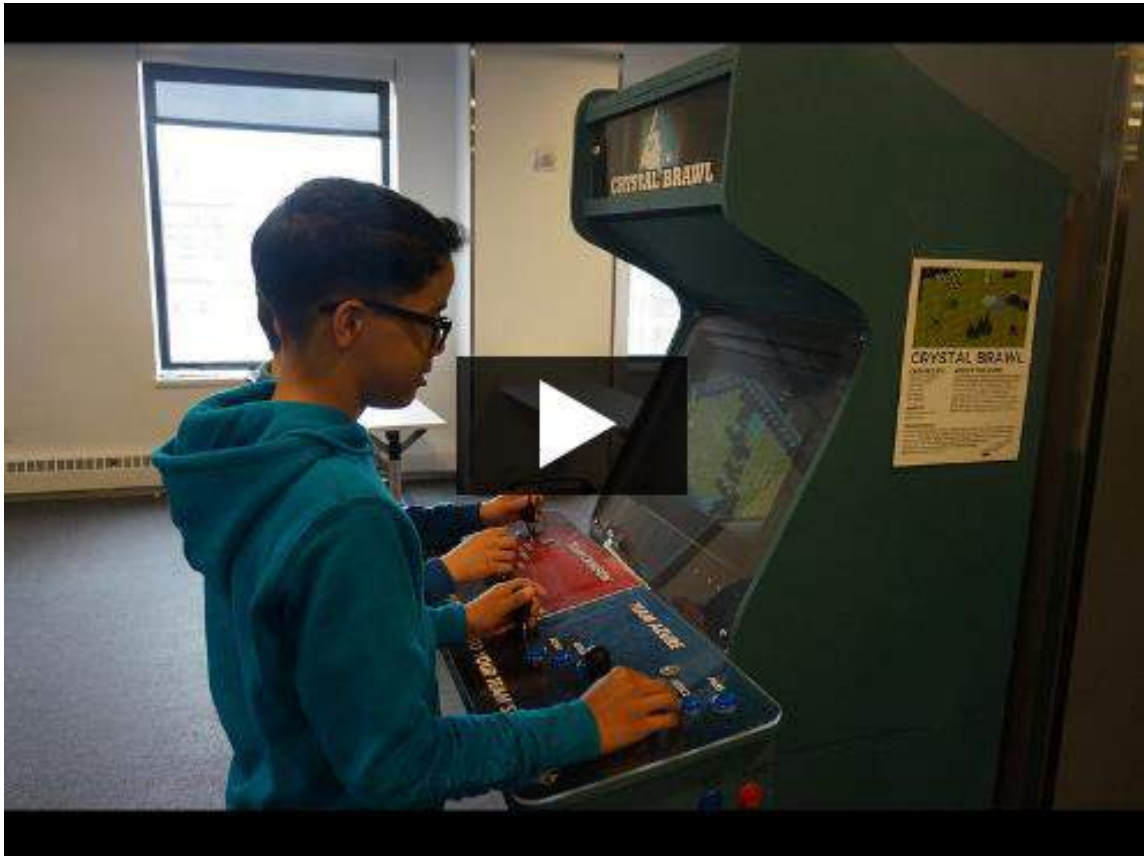


The winners of the 2013 National STEM Video Game Challenge at the 11th Annual Games for Change Award Ceremony held at NYU's Skirball Center. Photo by Allison Mishkin

The photo above was taken last night at NYU's Skirball Center at the 11th Annual Games for Change Festival Awards Ceremony as these fourteen young people from all over the country were being honored for their achievements as winners of the 2013 National STEM Video Game Challenge.

Gaming has touched the current generation of learners in a new way. [The 2013 National STEM Video Game Design Challenge](#) challenged enthusiastic students around the country to look under the hood of the games they play every day and to create their own. Entries were judged against three criteria (engaging gameplay, innovative/creative vision, well-balanced game play) and by design the competition encourages students to engage with a variety of tools available to them, such as Gamestar Mechanic, Scratch, and Kodu. After the competition ends, it's expected that students will bring these tools and ideas back to their learning communities.

These enterprising and creative young students also have a gift for helping their peers learn about subjects they are themselves deeply interested in. Look closely at the entries from the [2013 Challenge](#) and you'll find games that [teach physics](#), [French and Spanish vocabulary](#), and [environmentalism](#). We're proud of the hard work that these students have put into their winning games and have high hopes for their very bright futures.





April 24, 2014

Review Fix Exclusive: Games for Change Coverage Tuesday Wrap-Up



Games for Change, for the first time in association with Tribeca Film Festival, kicked off the 11th annual Games for Change Festival today at the New York University Skirball Center for the Performing Arts.

G4C Festival is the largest gaming event in New York City, with a focus far beyond the entertainment spectrum most would associate with video games. Today's festival leaves entertainment at [the core](#) of why people game, but also hones in on the impact these games generate throughout a society.

A strong list of keynote speakers — some in the game development field and others not — is what G4C is all about.

If you couldn't attend today's events, you're in luck. We've chosen three of our favorite keynotes from Tuesday to give you an idea of what you missed out on.

Games for Change in the Year 2014

Hosted by Jane McGonigal

At the start of the lineup was award-winning game [designer](#) and New York Times' bestselling author, Jane McGonigal, who decided to give the audience an idea of what she felt the future of gaming would look like, at least in 10 years or so, using a slideshow to visually describe a few games that might some day be real and grab hold of G4C's attention.

McGonigal began with "Everwin," a game where people can gain entry into the lotto by simply adding funds to their savings account; next was "Magical Mystery Diner," a game that combines that power of

the Oculus Rift [virtualreality](#) gaming headset and a 3D food printer to convince players that what they're eating tastes good, or that they're eating something else — bear with us here. This ultimately would allow people to spend less money on cheaper, possibly even healthier, food and their taste buds won't have to suffer the consequences.

The third game McGonigal introduced was “Walk My Mile,” another Oculus Rift project, where people can create games based off other individuals' lives so that players can — here comes the cliché — walk a mile in each others shoes; McGonigal then revealed arguably her most ambitious of the fictional titles, “MegaNFL,” where people must conduct physical activities in order to influence their favorite sports teams' scores, rather than sitting on their couches and watching the game at home.

Lastly, “Socrates 2.0” was shown, a game that allows people to make use of their interests by getting them active in the community, which then rewards them with points that displays their level of experience that could in turn help them find a career in the field of their respective interest... this one might take a moment to wrap your head around. Good luck.

At the end of her speech, McGonigal let the public vote on which of the aforementioned titles were their favorite. “Socrates 2.0” managed to come out on top, however McGonigal had a different one in mind.

“My personal favorite is the ‘MegaNFL,’ because I really am obsessed with how we can get people to be more physically active,” she told Review Fix after the keynote. “It's so hard to get people to exercise and yet we are so interested in sports and physical activity when other people play. So how can we take our passion for other people playing sports and the teams we cheer for and help bring that energy and movement into our real lives?”

“Plus, I love my favorite teams and I want to help them, I don't want to just cheer from behind my [television]. If my team is in the world series I want it to be because I helped them get there.”

“I've also worked with Nike,” she added. “[And] I feel like they can make it happen.”

GlassLab / Collaborating for Change

Hosted by Erik Huey, Jessica Lindl, Erin Hoffman and Bobak Ferdowsi

The Games, Learning and Assessment Lab hosted an afternoon keynote that touched on the potential for education in games, more specifically, getting games into middle school classrooms.

Lead Game Designer at GlassLab Erin Hoffman took to the stage today to discuss how the organization provides a model to accelerate the research and development as well as distribution of educational games.

Speaking with Review Fix afterwards, Hoffman briefly explained what the studio's primary goal is, saying, “We want to put games in classrooms that use data from players' behaviors in the game, so from playing the game to be reflected back to the players themselves and teachers, to teach kids and teachers new things about themselves through their behavior in the game. So we really just want to

leverage ‘play’ as a deep learning experience that’s powered by big data... because that’s the dream [chuckles].”

She later described where she hoped the studio will end up in the years to come.

“I would love to see GlassLab as this portal, a learning game network that has dozens and dozens of games that are built according to this methodology that we have of aligning the game mechanics with the learning, like I want to see a whole genre of those games, games for every subject, to where teachers could just look through this big catalog and say, ‘I want to teach this one thing and I’m going to customize the learning experience of this particular student because I think that this game is going to be especially good for them.’”

GlassLab also announced today a collaboration with NASA for their latest project, “Mars Generation One: Argubot Academy,” available now on iOS for iPad.

“Mars Generation One: Argubot Academy” is a futuristic adventure set in the year 2054, where a civilization on Mars has finally been established and students must use critical thinking skills and learn to become a responsible leader.

“[Our goal is to make] the learning experience as engaging as what kids are doing outside of a classroom by their own choice,” General Manager of GlassLab Jessica Lindl told Review Fix. “And through that, through our work with leading edge science, ensuring that we’re making a big impact on the learning trajectory of kids so that they learn better and faster with digital games.”

Block by Block — Using Minecraft in Urban Planning Projects

Hosted by Pontus Westerberg

This one we’ll keep short and sweet.

Digital Projects Officer at UN-Habitat, Pontus Westerberg explained how “Minecraft” is helping to revolutionize building projects. In 2012, the organization partnered with “Minecraft” developer Mojang to create Block by Block, where the two associates would use the hit indie title to involve citizens in the planning and design of public spaces.

Block by Block targets people of all ages, though they focus more on the youth, allowing people even with little-to-no educational background to participate in reconstructing their local public spaces. Westerberg displayed near-identical side-by-side photos of places built in the “Minecraft” universe that ultimately became a reality, made in-game by the community.



April 23, 2014

Highlights from Day 1 of the 11th Annual Games for Change Festival

Earlier today, **Games for Change** kicked off the first day of the **11th Annual Games for Change Festival**, held as part of the Tribeca Innovation Week at the **2014 Tribeca Film Festival**, presented by AT&T (TFF). You can catch archived footage at their [Livestream](#) channel.

Below is a recap of today's event, including highlights from a few key presentations.

Highlights from Day 1 of the Games for Change Panel include:

In a session on how games can achieve social impact at scale, **GlassLab** (the Games, Learning and Assessment Lab), discussed how collaboration is the key to increasing the social impact of games. The Lab is a collaboration between leaders in commercial games, experts in learning and assessment, and many other organizations with a role to play in the landscape of 21st century learning. Participants got a first look at a new game, launched at Games for Change, called Mars Generation One: Argubot Academy, which was developed in collaboration with NASA. GlassLab provides a model to accelerate the research, development and distribution of high-quality educational games.

Jane McGonigal, world-renowned designer of alternate reality games and New York Times best-selling author, gave a talk on what games for change will be like in the year 2024. The talk encouraged spectators to think beyond today's generation of social, mobile, and quest-based games.

Noah Falstein, Chief Game Designer for Google, spoke about the ecosystem of game development, including new technology, research, hardware, and business models that are all causing disruption and their significant implications for Games for Change.

In a talk called **State of the Indie + State of the Industry**, Zach Gage, game designer, and Erik Huey, Senior Vice President of Government Affairs, Entertainment Software Association, highlighted the current realities and trends in the game creation world with a focus on indie gaming.

In a session by Pontus Westerberg, Digital Projects Officer from UN-Habitat, Pontus explained the process and benefits of using **Minecraft** in building projects, giving examples from Kenya, Nepal, Sweden and Haiti. In 2012, UN-Habitat, the United Nations programme for sustainable towns and cities, and Mojang, the makers of Minecraft, entered into an innovative partnership. Through the partnership, named Block by Block, UN-Habitat uses Minecraft to involve citizens, particularly young people, in the planning and design of quality public spaces worldwide.

Abby Speight, Senior Product Manager of Zynga.org, moderated a session called **“Designing for Impact: How Commercial Games Are a Platform for Engaging Players in Social Causes.”** The discussion featured experienced game designers who have proven that the right balance among competing priorities in commercial games can lead to impact in the real world without sacrificing gameplay or business outcomes.

Dr. Adam Gazzaley, neuroscientist at the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF), shared a vision of the future in which video games are used as an underlying engine to enhance our brain’s information processing systems, thus reducing our reliance on non-specific drugs to treat neurological and psychiatric conditions and allowing us to better target our educational efforts.

Tomorrow marks the second day of the three day-long Games for Change Festival. A full schedule of the tomorrow’s events, including panel/keynote topics can be found [here](#).

REMAKE LEARNING

Blog of the Pittsburgh Kids+Creativity Network

April 22, 2014

The Power of Games for Change



Attendees at this week's 2014 Games for Change Festival in New York City will hear from Pittsburgh technologists and artists about how they're using games to create connected learning opportunities for the region's students.

The [Games for Change Festival](#) is kicking off this week in New York City and Pittsburgh's designers, developers and educators are showing up in full force.

The four-day fest promotes live-action, [physical](#) games (including an "epic" retelling of the fall of the Roman Republic) and video games with a social impact (like [Start the Talk](#) that helps parents build real-life skills to help them talk with their child about underage drinking.) The festival includes presentations, workshops, awards, and of course, plenty of [chances to play the games](#) themselves.

This year's G4C award nominees include [Papers, Please](#), in which gamers act as an immigration inspector in a fictional country and decide who can enter and who is arrested or turned away. Another award finalist, [TyrAnt](#) brings players down to level of everyday, boring ol' backyard ants and slowly unveils their amazingly complex ecosystem.

The festival celebrates games that have a purpose beyond entertainment– the types of games [games-based learning advocates](#) around the country have embraced for their ability to engage kids (and adults) in critical thinking and decision making while immersing them in a medium they love.

This year, for the first time, social impact games and G4C are going to be in the brightest spotlight yet. G4C is partnering with Tribeca Film Festival to bring together über talented game creators and storytellers—a natural fit, if you think about it. But beyond the collaboration potential, pairing up with the well-known film festival means wider exposure.

“I feel like we are crossing the line into something that is more mainstream,” G4C President Asi Burak [told Polygon](#). “When games are a part of something larger, like the Tribeca Film Festival, they can be very effective, and now we are a more public facing program because we are participating in the [Family Day](#).”

Another similarity between films and games is the intense passion of their creators. Jesse Schell, CEO of [Schell Games](#), [is speaking](#) on Wednesday about how passion and “authentic caring” is successfully infused into some games while other games fall flat.

Based in Pittsburgh, Schell Games is a national leader in transformational games. The company lists The Fred Rogers Company, Pixar and PBS Kids among its clients.

Schell’s success venturing into the world of educational games was no easy feat. Developing games that will actually work in schools is notoriously tricky, as educators need to be convinced the games really will enhance students’ learning.

[Turning Fantasy Into Reality: Building Games That Schools Need](#), a panel on Thursday led by [Kevin Bushweller](#), [Constance Steinkuehler](#), [Alan Gershenfeld](#) and [Chris Curran](#), will explore the mistakes developers most often make when heading into the K-12 market and consider how developers can transform “the fantasy of a game” into a successful, applicable tool for learning or assessment.

Steinkuehler, a senior policy analyst at the Office of Science and Technology Policy, is also participating in a discussion with award-winning game designer and author [Jane McGonigal](#) and EdTech innovator [Idit Harel Caperton](#) about the role of women in the game media industry. Everyone has heard how male-dominated the industry still is (47 percent of gamers are women, but 88 percent of video game developers are male, [according to Women’s Media Center](#)), but the three experts are going a step further to hammer out what they think needs to happen to achieve gender parity. After all, encouraging the next generation of girls to pursue game development would be a social change in itself.

Remake Learning is representing at the festival in a [talk-show style panel](#) on Thursday, Remaking Learning: Live from Pittsburgh. [Michael Levine](#), [Drew Davidson](#), [Gregg Behr](#), [Cathy Lewis Long](#) and [Michelle King](#) will dive into how tech experts, artists, educators, and gamers that make up the Kids+Creativity Network are crossing boundaries and forming a connected learning ecosystem.

It’s fitting that the Kids+Creativity Network gets its time in the G4C spotlight, as Pittsburgh is becoming a national leader in games-based learning. The city’s penchant for interdisciplinary collaboration has [formed a hotbed for games-based learning innovations](#).

For example, educators at Elizabeth Forward Middle School [partnered with the Entertainment Technology Center](#) at Carnegie Mellon University and the online learning platform Zulama to teach game design with an emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and math. ([Drew Davidson](#), director

of the ETC, will be [demo-ing a G4C award-finalist game](#) along with Nick Fortungo, co-founder of Playmatics, on Wednesday.)

The City of Pittsburgh and the Kids + Creativity Network will be recognized with a [Tribeca Disruptive Innovation Award](#) on Friday. The award honors people or organizations that have made a social impact by breaking the mold—something Pittsburgh’s gamers, educators, makers, and kids are definitely pros at.



April 22, 2014

Games For Change: Now, In NYC!



It's a fun world out there- but it's not all games. That's the message we've been taking away from the first day of the [Games for Change festival](#), being held now through this weekend in New York, largely at NYU, in conjunction with the Tribeca Film Festival.

Thus far, Jane McGonigal opened the show with a compelling talk about games of the future- and we're not talking about Call of Duty XXV, but new ways of playing, and how they will affect the world. And moments ago, we learned how a group is piloting a project in Jordan that takes Farmville-like mechanics but turns the city builder into a compelling way to inform players about civic engagement, working with NGOs to inform and educate about topics that make sense... and even drive real-life tasks as well, somehow using action to replace micro-transactions.

Tomorrow's sessions include some networking and table topics socializing at local [board game cafe, The Uncommons](#). And headliner Dan Ariely has a talk at noon, talking about how to modify behavior to improve goal achievement in the long term. Thursday, in Washington Square Park, a massive game called Feed will take place, with the aim of combating world hunger. Additional lectures on Prediction Games, Gender Inequality, and Emotional Storytelling are just a few of the others, and several interesting games showcased in talks are playable on-site here at the Skirball Center. With awards, and even an awesome outdoor arcade this Saturday, Games For Change is an important event- and you should definitely join if you can! Limited registration is still available, [with great student discounts](#).



April 15, 2014

Games for Change: 'social impact gaming' celebrated at New York festival



[The Games for Change Festival](#), New York City's largest gaming event, gets underway next week, celebrating the innovation and development of 'social impact' gaming.

Founded in 2004 and now in its 11th year, Games for Change hopes to "*facilitate the creation of social impact games*", as well as promote, educate and "*leverage entertainment for social good*".

The annual festival will feature an assortment of gaming experts and guest speakers working in the gaming industry across the globe.

During the course of the three-day festival (April 22-24), and the one-day (26 April) outdoor public arcade at the Tribeca Film Festival in Lower Manhattan, speakers will present their gameplay visions, inventions and ideas, and

explain how they can bring about social change.

There will be a range of talks, panel discussions and game demonstrations covering many different themes, including how to design and engage commercial games for social impact, as well as gender inequality in games and gaming culture.

Experts like Noah Falstein, chief game designer at Google, will discuss the rapidly evolving technology, and look at the implications this evolution may have on the Games for Change approach.

Midway through the festival, a Games for Change Awards ceremony will take place, which looks to pay tribute to those individuals who have made the greatest contributions to games that do social good. There will be winners from each of the categories for the year in most innovative, most impactful and best gameplay, and a further one winner for game of the year.

On this evening, a game changer award will be presented to Dr James Paul Gee for his work on the learning attributes in digital games, and how ultimately video games hold the ability to have a real impact on people's lives.



April 7, 2014

Games For Change Announces People's Choice Award



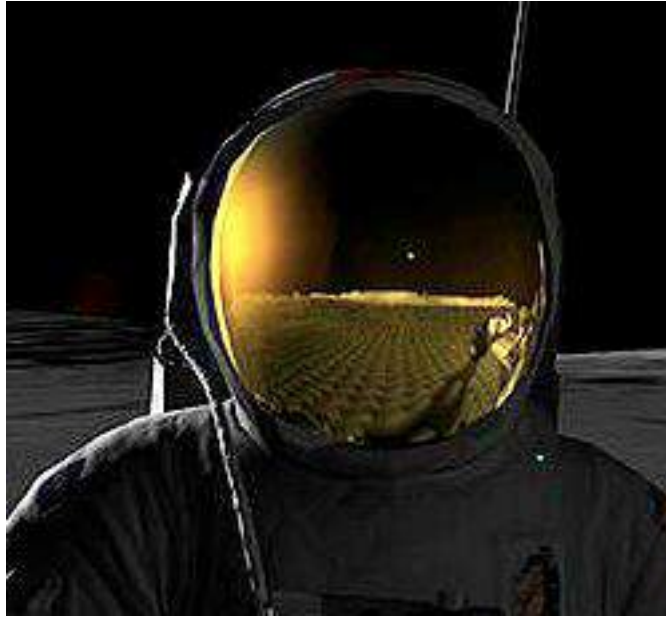
Games for Change, in partnership with the **Schusterman Philanthropic Network** (Schusterman), has selected the final three designs submitted as part of the [Shoot for the Moon game design challenge](#)! The finalists will debut their concepts on stage at the **Games for Change Festival** on **Wednesday, April 23** for a shot at a **\$25,000 cash prize**.

And for the first time, Games for Change is announcing a **People's Choice Award** where the public can vote on the "Shoot for the Moon" competition winner, as well. Voting is going on now until **Thursday, April 10** and three lucky voters will win three passes to next year's Games for Change Festival.

The finalists bring very different concepts and strong experience to the Shoot for the Moon competition, with veteran game legend and Game Developers Conference founder **Chris Crawford** (creator of pioneering games on real-world issues such as *Balance of Power* and *Gossip*), and teams from the **Ohio State University** and independent studio **Theorify**.

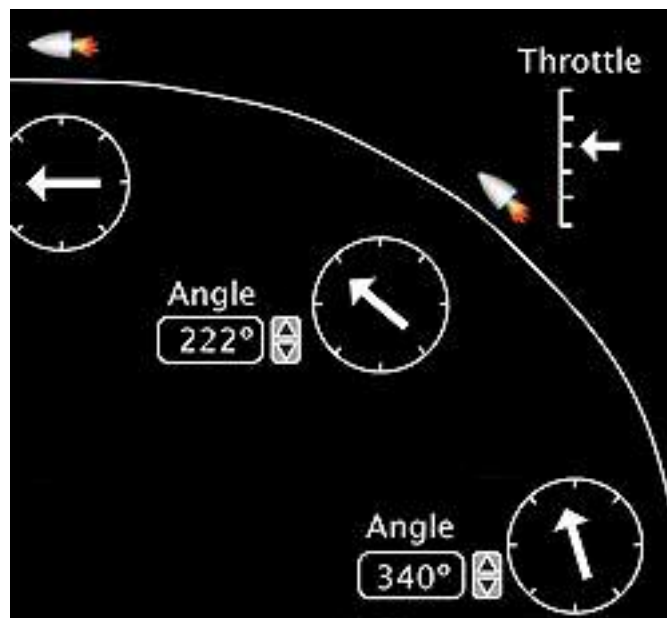
Learn more about the finalists...

Moon Rush by Lunar Rocks (Ohio State University)



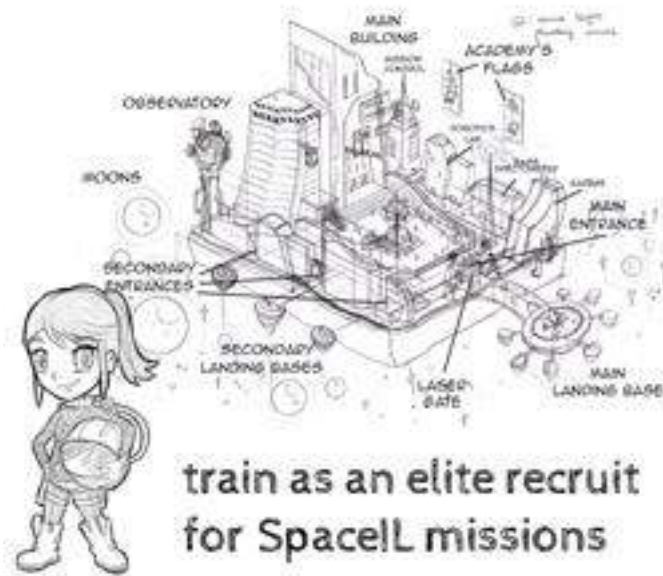
Strategically navigate your way to the Moon on limited fuel while avoiding unpredictable obstacles such as meteorites. Land at the Apollo 17 site and capture photos of the Moon's surface. [Learn more](#) and [play their demo](#).

Rocket Science by Chris Crawford



An unmanned rocket simulator for finding the ideal balance between engine power and fuel consumption, and learning about rocket engines and how their size affects the mission. Play through different aspects of: rocket design, launch and boost phase, translunar injection, and the landing sequence while preparing for a mission to the Moon. [Learn more](#).

SpaceIL Academy by Theorify



You have been recruited to train in spaceflight simulations as a cadet at the space station academy. In this animated massively multiplayer adventure with realistic Newtonian physics, fly your customized spaceship on missions to nearby moons and complete STEM homework puzzles to graduate and join the fleet. [Learn more and play their demo.](#)



March 25, 2014

Get your head in the game



Movies, books and other forms of entertainment have long been responsible for reshaping our beliefs and inspiring social movements. For these types of media, it's not only allowed but applauded to address uncomfortable issues ranging from slavery to mental health. These themes, however, are often thought to be outside the realm of video games. Games are at best seen as a form of escapism, and at worst a social plague turning children into mindless violent drones.

Games for Change seek to counteract this, and to realise the positive potential inherent in games. The non-profit organisation seeks to promote what have been called "social impact games". Games for Change's Meghan Ventura described the product as games "that address real world issues or experiences that really range from the documentary style games to the more autobiographical where people just talk about their own experiences". One such game places you in the shoes of a reporter in Darfur, forcing the player to face the same challenges as the real world reporters who developed the game. Another uses a series of mini games to display the challenges confronting those who undergo hormone replacement therapy.

It's an innovative concept, and Ventura is honest about how most people view video games. When it comes to trying to demonstrate how effective these games can be, Ventura said, "It's definitely a problem." However, Games for Change have made some impressive strides in this uphill battle. This year's annual festival, the highlight of the Games for Change calendar, will be held as part of the Tribeca Film Festival. It's a monumental moment not just for social impact games, but for the industry as a whole.

At the same time, social impact games are becoming an increasingly prevalent part of the gaming ecosystem, with more games reaching popular platforms such as Steam. One such game, Depression Quest, serves as an excellent example of how effective games can be in trying to help players understand complex issues. The text-based, choose-your-own-adventure style game deals with its subject matter with a maturity and frankness that is rarely seen in the industry. Placing the player in the position of a young adult suffering from depression, the game tasks you with making choices that in turn affect your depression level. The more depressed the player is, the less choices are available to them.

If it sounds dreary and intense that's because it is. Unsurprisingly, those looking for a traditional video game adventure won't find it in a game titled Depression Quest. Unlike most games, the goal is not to provide the player with a sense of accomplishment, or even to tell a story. For creator Zoe Quinn, the game is designed as both an attempt to help people try to understand the challenges facing those with depression, while also trying to help those who do suffer realise they are not alone.

It's a sharp contrast to the traditional video game archetype of empowering the player. As Ventura puts it, the strength of social impact games is not only "the amount of agency they give the player, but also the lack of agency". Depression Quest places you in ordinary situations, and demonstrates how depression can take away your ability to make everyday choices.

It seems much harder to find a way of justifying popular Facebook games like Farmville as anything but a massive waste of time. But these games are a critical part of the social impact gaming network. One such game, Safari Challenge, boldly claims to "redeem the entire field of wasting time". The game itself feels a lot like Farmville, but with one major difference. Instead of earning money, energy and other gameplay elements, the player earns "impact" points that can be used to invest wells, schools and other African aid projects.

As with most social games, you either pay to accelerate your progress, or progress for free, either slowly overtime or by spamming your Facebook friends with invites until they block you. On the other hand, no matter how you progress, you still earn impact points. So even if you never spend a cent, you can nevertheless contribute toward these projects. It's impressive that River Island Games could make such a model work, even if they are lending a hazardous amount of legitimacy to those prone to procrastination.

However, it's also clear that social impact games are still in their infancy. Many of the games could perhaps be better classified as promising experiments as opposed to fully fledged experiences. The most successful of the games often last under an hour, allowing their statement to be made without dwelling long enough to reveal the often rudimentary game mechanics that lie beneath.

It's clear that Games For Change are really starting to gather momentum. Some of the most prominent figures in social activism are now lending their support to the project. "When former vice president Al Gore came to our festival and keynoted, and talked about how games are the new normal, that was really exciting." At the same time, the games are rapidly progressing in both quality and popularity. Last March, the company developed their own Facebook game: Half the Sky, which became a breakout success. The game, launched in March, has already reached one million subscribers and raised over half a million dollars for various causes.

Games for Change now has international chapters spanning everywhere from South Korea to Israel. Through events like Tribeca Film Festival they are penetrating the mainstream, and through platforms like Steam they are forging their mark in gaming culture. It's becoming increasingly evident that this is a new, unique, and rapidly evolving medium that allows people to channel their creativity in ways never before possible. Books, movies and other forms of entertainment have long since used their unique tools to address some of society's most important issues. Now, with games, there is a whole new set of tools available.

AdLibbing

March 24, 2014

Games for Change: An Interview with Meghan Ventura



The Ad Council recently spoke with Meghan Ventura, Community Manager at [Games for Change](#). Founded in 2004, Games for Change is a nonprofit organization that facilitates the creation and distribution of social impact games that serve as critical tools in humanitarian and educational efforts. The Games for Change Festival is taking place this April in New York City. The Ad Council will be attending and celebrating our own games from this year including [Toothsavers](#) and [Sweater Yourself](#). Join us there and use code g4c14-adcouncil for 10% off your tickets.

Ad Council: What is the Games for Change Festival?

Meghan Ventura: The Games for Change Festival is an annual event that takes place in New York City, and for the first time this year we're joining the Tribeca Film Festival. The Games for Change festival provides an opportunity to connect with game creators and social change makers, and learn first-hand from leaders in this field. The Festival began 10 years ago as a small gathering of friends and colleagues, which eventually grew into the 800-person conference it is today, with thousands watching online via Livestream.

AC: Who should (or does) go?

MV: I'd like to answer with "everyone," but to be more specific, our audience comprises the social change community (nonprofits, NGOs, social entrepreneurs), the games industry (developers, designers, publishers, etc.), funders, media, academia and educators, and government. If you've ever even thought

about creating a game for social good, you should come out and see what's [happening in this space](#). And anyone who loves playing games — whether it's *Candy Crush* or *Call of Duty* — benefits from checking out the [Games for Change Public Arcade at the Tribeca Family Festival Street Fair](#). It's free and open to the public, all about social good, and full of really fun digital games, as well as live street games from [Come Out & Play](#) and the game-based [Quest to Learn public school](#) for attendees to play. The Festival also facilitates a “perfect storm” to meet the right people for your next or current project. For example, [Jewish Time Jump: New York](#), a game on Jewish-American history that was nominated in the Games for Change Awards last year, was created by an attendee who was inspired at our 2010 G4C Festival. This year there are more networking opportunities through speed networking, an opening night party, “meet the expert” events, and more. These will provide the right connections for those interested in creating social commentary games.

AC: What makes a really great game?

MV: This is a question that's often examined at the Games for Change Festival. But to give a short answer, it's often said that good games are about interesting choices, or presenting the player with options where their actions will have a clear effect in the game world and on their progress, and give them a sense of agency. Interesting choices make games memorable – oftentimes, when players discuss games a lot of that will center around “what did you do here?” or “I chose option x, and got this ending.” One example from the commercial game world is [The Walking Dead](#) series, which gained immense popularity around the extremely difficult decisions it presented players. [Unmanned](#), [Papers, Please](#), and [Quandary](#) are all recent social impact games that present strong decisions and choices. A really great game for impact is one where a game's mechanics, or what you do in the game and how you do it, go hand-in-hand with the developers' message. (Or subvert it entirely!) For example, [Cart Life](#), a game about working in retail, makes you go through these rote, mundane, sometimes crushingly frustrating tasks. In the adventure game [Papo & Yo](#), an autobiographical allegory for growing up with an alcoholic parent, players cooperate with a benevolent and friendly monster — until it eats one of the frogs that it's addicted to and goes on a unstoppable rage that forces the player into running and hiding. (The next game from the same studio, Minority Media, will address bullying.) [Spec Ops: The Line](#) takes the war-time first-person shooter and throws the violence back in the players' face in an unforgettable way.

AC: What are the top games out there promoting social good? And what makes them great?

MV: Other than the ones listed above, one of the most popular [games listed on Games for Change's site](#) right now is [Dumb Ways to Die](#), a hilarious string of mini-games designed to promote safety around public transportation. It's short, snappy, and anyone can pick up its touch-based controls quickly. Another one is the [Half the Sky](#) suite of games (which Games for Change produced). It has had 1,000,000 players, raised over half a million dollars for targeted causes, and has been shown in rigorous studies to help players, here and in developing nations, make better choices about health. Increasingly, we also see games from independent game makers who — while not necessarily purposefully designing a game “for change” — make games about real-world issues or more mature subjects not typically discussed in mainstream commercial games. And we see massively popular commercial games like [FarmVille 2](#) (which will be featured at the [Games for Change Public Arcade](#) on April 26), which leverage their success to do enormous good in the world.

AC: What's an amazing success story you've witnessed from Games for Change?

MV: Two developers from the 2013 Games for Change Awards had their games published on the PC-based distribution platform Steam: Lucas Pope (nominated for *The Republica Times*, and creator of *Papers, Please*) and Filament Games created the plant biology game and Best Gameplay Award-winner [Reach for the Sun](#).

AC: What has surprised you the most at G4C?

MV: While more people are accepting that there can be games that are on the same level as documentaries in film, many still don't realize that games are already doing a lot that go beyond entertainment and for positive social impact. Games are certainly gaining more recognition as a medium for social good (we've seen quite a few articles on "empathy games" in the past year), but sometimes we're a little too impatient for these game makers to receive wide public recognition. We hope as key figures in the games industry continue to push for a wider diversity in games (Nintendo just credited [diversity as a key component](#) to the success of one of its best-selling games last year) that games will be viewed as the more worldly and positive medium that they often already are.

FILMMAKER

March 10, 2014

Tribeca Film Festival Announces “Innovation Week”

The Tribeca Film Festival has made significant strides to transform their trend-buoyed cachet into a boundary pushing enterprise. Last year, TFF introduced Storyscapes, a transmedia installation that probed the intersection of technology, interactivity and installation art, and this year, De Niro and Co. are extrapolating from the initiative, launching a full blown “Innovation Week.” From April 21-26, the festival hopes to become ground zero for hackers, screenwriters, engineers and venture capitalists alike, with a program centered around the Fifth Annual Tribeca Disruptive Innovation Awards (TDIA), Future of Film Live with Aaron Sorkin, Tribeca Hacks <Mobile>, a TFI Interactive summit, the Games for Change Festival and the sophomore Storyscapes.

- **11th Annual Games for Change Festival (April 22 – 24 & 26)** – Collaborating around the premise that digital games can effect positive social change, the largest gaming event in New York City is now part of the Tribeca Film Festival. This three-day international event held at NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts unites innovators and game developers with change makers and educators who believe in the transformational power of games and game thinking. On April 26, G4C and TFF will host the Games for Change Public Arcade as part of the TFF Family Festival Street Fair in Lower Manhattan. Join the conversation on Twitter and Facebook with the hashtag #G4C14

Previous attendees have included the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Facebook, Fast Company, Mashable, Microsoft, MIT Media Lab, The New York Times, the UN World Food Programme and Warner Bros.



January 23, 2014

The transformative power of video game storytelling

This week, the Games For Change organisation announced its 11th annual festival will be held in collaboration with the Tribeca Film Festival. Joe Donnelly was reminded of a late 19th century short story based on the American Civil War.



Considering the ethos and direction of both the Tribeca Film Festival and Games For Change, not to mention the fact that they are both based in New York, this partnership may be of little surprise – in fact what might be more surprising is that the two haven't joined forces before now.

Regardless, the collaboration marks the TFF's drive towards "bringing the industry and community together around storytelling" and is an acknowledgment that video games now stand at the forefront of such a movement, alongside more traditional mediums.

"Tribeca recognizes the transformative power of gaming that goes far beyond the traditional entertainment value of games," said TFF Co-Founder Craig Hatkoff of the partnership earlier this week.

"The impact and integration has been spreading rapidly across virtually all domains. Of particular interest is how gaming has scaled to social good, from education to healthcare, and from conflict resolution to religion.

“By partnering with Games for Change, we hope to bring together the most cutting-edge creators of games, educators, and the world’s greatest story-tellers. Together, they will create the latest innovations in gaming for the social good to even wider audiences. We look forward to further expanding our relationship with Games for Change in the future.”

Asi Burak, President of Games for Change echoed a similar line. “The new relationship with the Tribeca Film Festival is an incredible opportunity to reach a new audience for the ‘games for good’ sector,” he said. “Games are often discussed in the context of entertainment, but with this event, we’ll be able to share our message that this medium can be very powerful in creating positive change in the world.”



Of course, such media convergence between film and games isn’t anything new – movies are regularly spawned from video games and likewise games from the big screen. But on reading both Burak and Hatkoff’s comments, I was immediately reminded of a remarkably moving, yet entirely simple game [played last year on freeware site Game Jolt](#): An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge.

An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge

Based on the late 19th century short story of the same name by American author Ambrose Bierce, An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge tells the tale of a Confederate rebel condemned to death by hanging during the American Civil War. Upon being pushed from Owl Creek Bridge, the rope tied around the protagonist’s neck snaps, plunging him into the river below. He makes his way to dry land, dodging showers of bullets from above, making his escape deep into the surrounding forest. The Union follow on in hot pursuit, but the protagonist continues to evade them, in spite of their growing numbers, spurred

on by the thought of his wife and children awaiting his return. A staggering twist marks the end of this poignant tale.

In 1962, a French short film adaptation of Bierce's work, named [La Rivière du Hibou](#), was released to critical acclaim, scooping awards at both the Cannes Film Festival and the Oscars, and featured as an episode of The Twilight Zone in 1964.

Having read the original short story, and having watched the half an hour long movie, An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge stands as a quintessential example of the importance of interactive media. In just over five minutes of retro-inspired pixelated gameplay, James Earl Cox III's video game interpretation of Bierce's work, which includes no dialogue whatsoever, is by far the most emotive and encapsulating of the three.



In light of the Tribeca Film Festival and Games For Change collaboration, An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge is testament to how video games can be used to great effect not only when telling a story, but also to convey emotion and a compelling message. It's remarkable that Cox is able to evoke such emotion from the player in such a short timeframe, however this must be explained by the interactivity bestowed upon the medium.

David Cage's drive towards creating games which mimic cinema has been well-documented, however here we have a game far less reliant on realism in the way of aesthetics, but enriched with captivating storytelling. Hopefully this partnership works to educate those less aware of the transformative powers of video games, of which Hatkoff speaks.

Although perhaps not quite as prestigious as an Academy Award, An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge won Silver at the 2013 International Serious Play Awards, and is [headed to Desura on February 14 of this year.](#)

Pizza and a movie for Valentines Day? What about pizza and a video game, instead?