



## Success Story— The NCG

The NCG is providing direct support to programs of school-age children that use games as a way to develop social skills and decision-making skills as well as programs that bring children together for a healthy mix of fun, education, competition, and social development through games. The group dynamics of games is an excellent way of getting to know, understand, and communicate with people who might not be in one's family or typical circle of friends. The NCG focuses on building skills of cooperation, participation, communication, sportsmanship, and teamwork through games. The NCG has chapters across the U.S.A. and is uniquely positioned to provide support to individuals that need our support to improve social skills, decision-making skills, and leadership skills. In particular, the NCG focuses on how games help special-needs children, economically disadvantaged children, at-risk children, and other school-age children.

One recent example of how The NCG has made a difference is its launch and support for 'Gamers of Costilla County'. Costilla County is a remote and economically depressed area of Colorado. In fact, the county is the 45th poorest county in the United States. The region sparsely populated, having only 3,500 people in the entire county (and a population density of only 3 people per square mile). Sadly, nearly 50% of the population of the county is below the poverty line, with children under the age of 18 being impacted the most.

With little more than a local community center to keep busy, the children of the area are in need for educational as well as recreational activities that will help them in their social development. The community center is overwhelmed with the demand for such activities but has little funding to operate anything beyond the swimming pool and an open basketball court. The community center has become a 'hang out' for kids who have little to do. .

Keith Hershey is one of the local residents of the community who has known about Social Interactions and the objectives of the National Community of Gamers (The NCG). As an advocate for the benefits games bring to children's social development, he reached out to SII for help in building an after-school gaming program at the community center. The NCG supplied a large of games to support the after school program, focusing on cooperative-play board games, roleplaying games to spur imagination, and games that are help decision-making. The administrator for the Community Center, Tomas Maestas, told SII that such a program will be greatly helpful for local students who have little to do with the limited activities at the Community Center and it couldn't have been done without the help of The NCG program and Keith Hershey. Mr. Maestas quickly supported the idea and has provided a dedicated room for children to learn and play games. Mr. Hershey is working directly with Social Interactions in the development of the program and has had regularly scheduled gaming activities that enhance cooperative skills, decision making skills, social skills for these school aged participants.

Social interactions has also donated funds for the purchase of games and has supplied an LCD projector for the community center. SII has also started a campaign of businesses in the region to match donations for this program. Mr. Hershey stated "Through the NCG program and the help of other local businesses, the kids will learn valuable skills such as problem and creative thinking. It will also create instances where they will meet new people. By meeting new people they will learn social skills on how to teach, communicate and work as a team to overcome obstacles."

The NCG is also becoming involved with helping gaming programs for special needs children in Solon City Schools, extending their after school gaming activities for at-risk youth with several county court systems, orphan programs, and providing games for children in Shelter Homes.



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