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- Lisa Hutchinson, *Social Interactions* participant
Cleveland, Ohio

Social Interactions Overview

Founded in 2006, *Social Interactions* aims to change the way we socialize. *Social Interactions* sees social skills having a critical impact on a child's personal success in life. In a world where we are so often connected virtually, *Social Interactions* focuses on enhancing the real social interactions for children. Our programs are uniquely positioned to provide support to individuals that need our support to improve social skills, decision-making skills, and leadership skills for:

- Special-needs children.
- Economically disadvantaged children.
- At-risk children.
- School-age children.

Social Interactions is 501(c)3 public charity and an all-volunteer organization with chapters across the United States.

Mission Statement

To empower individuals facing life challenges by improving their social skills and interactions through educational, literary, and recreational activities.

How You Can Help

Social Interactions' three-year strategic plan focuses on strengthening core programs and expanding through events that build family and community bonds. You can help:

- **Donate:** One hundred percent of donations go toward funding existing and new programs to improve social skills, leadership skills and decision-making skills.
- **Volunteer:** The *Social Interactions* organization is run entirely by enthusiastic volunteers. If you are looking to make a difference in improving social interactions within your community, then *Social Interactions* is the right place for you!
- **Sponsor:** Are you a local business looking to get involved in the community? Join businesses like Starbucks, Dick's Sporting Goods and Redbox in sponsoring *Social Interactions*.

Programs

Writer's Bloc—Writer's Bloc provides support for activities for middle school and high school children to improve their writing skills through collaborative activities that directly improve their writing skills and social skills.

National Community of Gamers (NCG)—The NCG program provides support for 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 .

Outdoor Adventures—Outdoor Adventures provides support for nature-based activities for school-age children that enhances social skills and leadership skills.

Building Interpersonal Skills that Last a Lifetime!



Success Story—Writers Bloc

This year, SII's Writers Bloc program sponsored dozens of collaborative writing workshops, storytelling events, Skype sessions with authors, and also sponsored participants to take advantage of an interactive and collaborative storytelling game called "Storium". Our writing programs have involved over 150 participants and the sessions help new and experienced writers alike.

The Writer's Bloc program provides writing workshops for students in middle school and high school, as well as for adults. Our program activities are designed to help individuals draft, share, edit, and publish their writing. Facilitators provide sessions on idea generation, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Writing can be a very personal activity, and Writers Bloc is designed to ensure an environment of positive reinforcement, encouragement, and collaboration. The workshops improve writing skills and enable individuals to achieve their writing goals whether it is simply for personal satisfaction or publication.

"When I was in elementary school, each Saturday morning, I would get on the bus with my mom and two younger brothers and go downtown. My mom had a job cleaning office buildings and she couldn't afford a baby sitter, so before she started work, she would take us to the Cleveland Public library. My brothers and I would sit in the children's section all day and I would read to them out loud and then teach them to read themselves. Books were our entertainment, not TV. Later in the day, mom would pick us up and we would head back home, looking forward to the next week. I've always wanted to be an author, but just didn't know where to start, so I wouldn't. After joining the Writers Bloc program, I gained more and more confidence in my writing skills. Not only have my grades gone up, but I know have 4 notebooks filled with stories. The best part is that these stories are my brothers' favorites!"

Michelle Ware, Cleveland, Ohio

"The best part of Writers Bloc is the collaboration with other writers. I've struggled with writing all my life and have read dozens of books about writing but none of them equaled the great workshops and activities with other struggling writers. Having such a support network of local writers is something that cannot be matched."

Casey Brown, Cleveland, OH

"I attended Writers Bloc with the expectation that it was just another series of writing workshops, just walking in the door told me another story— everyone was friendly, willing to help and often struggling with the same issues of writing. Their facilitation sessions allow people to take advantage of their strengths and improve their weak areas in a very comfortable and friendly learning environment."

Amanda Caldwell, Meadville, PA

"As a former English and Creative Writing teacher, the Writers Bloc has renewed my love of teaching! Using the Collaborative Writing Curriculum, along with the prompts from each of the attendees, we are able to provide a dynamic learning opportunity for individuals who have always wanted to write, but didn't know where to get started."

Angela Lenhart, Volunteer, Springfield, IL

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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 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. 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 as well as extending their after school gaming activities for at-risk youth with several county court systems.

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Lisa Hutchinson, Cleveland, OH

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