ORLANDO BUSINESS JOURNAL

From the Orlando Business Journal:
http://www.bizjournals.com/orlando/blog/2010/12/locally-developed-energy-game-takes.html

Locally developed energy game takes 1st

Click to Print Now

Orlando Business Journal - by Kristen Stieffel

Date: Tuesday, December 14, 2010, 4:11pm EST

Kristen Stieffel
News assistant
Email: kstieffel@bizjournals.com

Some of us take gaming seriously, and not just because so much of our disposable income goes to GameFly and Xbox Live.

The 2010 Serious Games Showcase & Challenge competition was held this month as part of the Interservice/Industry Training, Simulation & Education Conference at the Orange County Convention Center. "Serious games" are akin to simulators, in that they teach real-world skills. Competition finalists were chosen by serious game experts from military, industry and academia. Entries were judged on solution to a stated problem, technical quality and playability.

After the virtual sunset, Energize players need a power source other than solar.

Illustrating some of the varied uses for serious gaming, finalists included a biology game for learning genetics, an anti-piracy game for merchant ships and a 3-D trainer for pig farmers.

The first place award in the student category went to Energize, a game created by the **University of Central Florida**'s Florida Interactive Entertainment Academy and the **Orlando Science Center**. In the game, players power a city using various energy sources, including nuclear, solar, wind and fossil fuels. Development of the game took about a year and was funded by grants from the Progress Energy Foundation and the **Turner Foundation**.

"Working on Energize was fulfilling not only because it was a great collaboration about an important topic but also because we felt that it became a genuinely fun and challenging game to play," said FIEA faculty member Ron Weaver, who oversaw the project.

That it is. As your city grows, you choose where to put different types of power plants. It also teaches about the shortcomings of each technology. For example, if you rely too much on solar power, you have trouble after the sun goes down.

You can see Energize online by clicking here or in the Orlando Science Center lobby, where it's on display in a kiosk. It will later become a companion piece to OSC's H2Now exhibit, which explores hydrogen power and other alternative energy sources. Energize will also be on display during OSC's annual gaming and simulation show, Otronicon, Jan. 14-17. If you come to Otronicon, keep an eye out for me. I volunteered to work in the simulator room again this year.