

Gaming club staying connected online

By **LAUREN MURPHY**
Of the Keizertimes

When Jamie Harris created Satellite Gaming Club for students, he intended for them to physically gather together as a community. Recent social distancing measures have called for a Plan B.

Like many other group advisors, Harris is reaching out to his students through social media, amongst other avenues. The main source of connection comes through the gaming platform, Twitch.

Twitch provides a space for gamers to play games together, watch other people play games and more.

"It's like YouTube of the nerd culture I suppose," Harris said.

The club is hosting live streams from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. every weekday. They host events for YoungLife on Mondays and work with other local

ministries.

There are usually 30 or so participants on any given live stream according to Harris.

"I would say like 75% [of participants] are local Salem-Keizer kids," he said.

Originally, most of the club members came from Harris' youth group (Harris is a Youth Pastor at Lakepoint Community Church) but gradually it evolved from that circle.

With the goal of widening their reach, Satellite Gaming Club broke off from Lakepoint and became its own non-profit ministry. Harris said they've reached from Silverton to Idaho.

"We want it to be something that is outside of the church world ... we want people to know that you don't have to agree with our foundation in order to hang out with us," Harris said.

He also said lots of times

students engage in the program and have no idea that the foundation is faith-based.

"We want to keep our relationship with the public school system what it should be, just an extracurricular option for kids regardless of what background they have," Harris said.

Now that they've found the online format to be sustainable, the club is going to start promoting itself on social media.

Harris had a lot he wanted to tell the members of the Satellite Gaming community. He wanted them to know they are loved and he urged them to stay healthy and connected.

"In summary I would tell these kids, know that you are loved, take care of yourself and if you don't know how to take care of yourself reach out to us and we might be able to give you some advice," he said, though he noted that adults are still figuring things out too.



File
Jamie Harris (right), founder of Satellite Gaming, has kept the after school club meeting through a Twitch channel.

He urged people to check in with one another – through a phone call, letter, or text message – to make sure the people

in our lives are being taken care of. "Just show up right now. That's a lot of what we need,"

Harris said. Interested students can find the club at www.twitch.tv/satellite_gaming.

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