

Gamer: 'Generally, I just go on a webpage and type, 'How do I do this?'

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Shepherd said he found a website that was started by an individual who goes by Black Thorn Prod where he could log on and request participation in the game jam.

"The first thing you need is a game engine," Shepherd said. "You download it and use it to play the game."

A game engine, also known as a game framework, is a software-development environment designed for people to build video games.

"It processes all the code and runs it," he said.

It allows you to put visual items in the scene of the game being built. With it, the developer drags a circle into the scene. A "transform" allows one to put items into the circle and place them at X, Y and Z coordinates for width, height and depth.

"But my game is just 2D so I only use X and Y coordinates," Shepherd said.

He went onto explain some of the technical issues involved.

"Then you have to create a new script, which tells it what to do under certain parameters using (computer) code," he said. "Like, in a script, I could say, 'On mouse, enter,' which just means when you hover your mouse pointer



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Shepherd Newton, a 12-year-old computer programmer, shows how Level Reset — the game he created recently — works at his Enterprise home Wednesday, March 10, 2021. He already has a business model in mind for use in his professional life one day.

over an object, it will trigger that thing, that part of a script. You also have opening and closing brackets. In there you say, maybe, 'transform scale' which means, you're calling for it to transform to say, 'I want my scale to += ' which means to add it ... on the X coordinate and the Y coordinate, an integer ... and then it'll add that to the scale whenever you have your mouse over it."

Crystal was quite aware how far over the head of mere mortals Shepherd was speaking.

"He just described the programming terminology that they use to create a chunk of software that's part of the game," she said. "That one chunk would transform however many objects you assign it to."

Crystal tried to translate it into English.

"We normal people usually don't think about coding in that way. We think of a program as one long line, but programmers today actually think of it in terms of chunks of information that they can use over and over again," she said.

They agreed a script can be saved and reused much the same way as a "copy and paste" function is saved and pasted in and out of a word

processor's clipboard.

"Eventually, it all compiles together and what the end user sees isn't like the scripts he described, but the actions those scripts call for," Crystal said. "It's like packing a dresser and instead of one big object, there's all these different drawers. This thing he just described is how you would define one action for a game."

But how did a 12-year-old learn all this at his tender age?

"Generally, I just go on a webpage and type, 'How do I do this?' and I watch a ton of tutorials, and eventually your brain learns to comprehend something," he said.

Crystal admitted much of what the rest of her family does with computers is beyond her.

"I will tell you, as the wife of my husband the mother of my son, I don't think this way," she said. "I think it's pretty much a natural ability that they can handle it with the tutorials and the learning."

While Shepherd's game, called "Level Reset" didn't gain a high ranking during the game jam — "Somewhere near the bottom," he said — it was a start. He hopes to participate in more game jams later this year.

"He is working on some

other games," Crystal said. "I do artwork, so I'm creating some artwork for a game he and I talked about making. He's always talking about different games he wants to work on. I think, what the game jam did, was give him a goal within a specific period of time that he had to achieve something he could submit."

Shepherd doesn't spend all his time on the computer. He's been involved in 4-H, having raised a prize-winning 39-pound turkey, and participated in archery and robotics. He also plays games with his parents.

In a way, he finds it an advantage being an only child.

"If I had brothers and sisters, I think I might be hindered by them saying, 'Let's go play,'" he said.

His parents are eager to see how Shepherd's computer skills blossom.

"We always talk to him about how he needs to build career skills through this," Tim said. "We have expectations how he should use this in the future as a career or on a business."

"For the first game that he made up, I was pretty proud of him — and he didn't stop doing his schoolwork," Crystal said. "We were doing school, too."

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Eagle Cap Shooters to build new facility

Received \$50,000 grant from NRA

By BILL BRADSHAW
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Plans call for a groundbreaking in April for a new educational building at the Eagle Cap Shooters Range north of Enterprise, according to a press release.

The Eagle Cap Shooters Educational Alliance received a \$50,000 grant from the National Rifle Association in 2020 and the alliance has nearly raised the required matching funds to pay for the new structure, said Stephen Wolfe, president of the alliance.

"We're almost to the deadline of \$50,000," he said.

Wolfe said the alliance continues to raise money through donations and gun raffles, both on its website and at the Stubborn Mule in Joseph.

"We're planning on asking a group of people to come in and give some donations," Wolfe said. "We're almost there and we'll probably need a bit more."

Gina Birkmaier, vice president of the alliance, said in the press release that the multipurpose building will provide an indoor facility for classes, events and training activities. Classes will be offered to range members, law enforcement personnel, nonprofit groups and to civic and charitable organizations, the release said.

The current facilities at the range include a 1,000-yard covered rifle range, a 50-yard covered pistol range, a 1,150-yard black powder cartridge range, a shotgun range with an electric turret and five competition bays.

Wolfe said he expects the new building will take 60-90 days to construct, and septic facilities already have

been installed.

With a new education building, there will be a consistent location available for such instruction as Hunters Education Programs, concealed carry and range safety officer training and more.

The purposes of the ECSEA include:

- To provide educational classes.

- To provide educational materials in a variety of formats and media.

- To conduct related educational programs that will educate people about responsible, proper, legal and safe ownership, storage, transport and use of firearms.

The classes and programs are open to all interested members of the public. The ECSEA is especially eager to educate young people who are interested in becoming hunters, as well as those who are gun owners, security workers and those who have or want to acquire permits for concealed weapons for personal safety, their families or places of employment.

For more information on the ECSEA, visit its website at eaglecapshooters.com or its Facebook page. Membership fees are listed on the website.

"We've been after this building for a lot of years," Wolfe said. "I'm looking forward to opportunities we'll have for hands-on training for youths and anyone else who wants to learn to handle their firearms. It's going to open up a whole new avenue for us."

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