

FROM DESKTOP TO TABLETOP

For Sydney Moeller, the Gaming Association offers more than play. It's a place to connect, recharge, and belong.

For Sydney Moeller, a senior double majoring in technical communication and computer science, game nights at Missouri S&T are more than a pastime. As the public relations chair for the Missouri S&T Gaming Association (MSTGA), she helps build a community where students can relax, connect, and roll the dice together.

The MSTGA aims to create a welcoming space for anyone interested in tabletop games, from beginners to seasoned players. The games are chosen at each meeting, and the attendees vary, making every meeting a little different. The club is a friendly place, focused on having a good time with people who share similar interests. After a few meetings, it tends to feel “just like meeting up with a bunch of old friends,” in the words of Moeller.

Initially, three things brought her to MSTGA: Foundations of Engineering 1100 and the Kummer Vanguard Scholars Program, both of which require students to join a club, and the board game *Betrayal at the House on the Hill*. She hadn't been looking for a game club, specifically, just wandering MinerRama in search of something.

Games had always been a part of her life. “My family has always had game nights,” Moeller stated, “but never any games that were too complicated.” The club allowed her to expand her knowledge of games, how they're played, and the different things that can be enjoyed about them.

After joining the club four years ago, Moeller became more involved when all but one of the officers graduated. She stepped in as treasurer and, the following year, created a new role for herself as PR chair, a position that aligned with her interests in technical communication. In that role, she applies the skills she has learned in her courses, managing the club's outreach, building its social media presence, and serving as its public voice.

By working closely with other past and present members and handling the club's PR, Moeller has gleaned some of MSTGA's lore, the small stories and traditions that connect members across years of change. Those stories matter because they preserve the club's identity, much of which was lost during the leadership transition, when the organization had to rebuild itself largely with sophomores.

One of the mysteries she solved was why the club had so much old CogCon material. The club hosts two major events each year: a homecoming game night and CogCon, the larger and better known of the two. As it turned out, the 2020 CogCon was cancelled when the pandemic hit, but preparations had already been made. Club members retained

and passed down documents, printed t-shirts, and other items from the CogCon that never was, and now they serve as a quiet reminder of a time many would rather forget.

The second mystery remains a mystery, but it has invited speculation and imagination that enrich the club's lore. Jared the bear, the club's mascot, is a giant tan stuffed bear that has occupied the club's office since before the leadership change. Little is known about the former officers, and even less about the bear himself. In the words of Moeller, “All we can be sure about is his name is Jared and he is probably an eldritch god of some sort watching over the game club.” Jared remains the club's greatest and cutest mystery, charming MSTGA members year after year.

Joining the club not only fulfilled Moeller's requirement to join a student organization, it also gave her a place to connect with others. “S&T can be a very intense place, especially as an incoming freshman,” she said, “and then you can come in and play a silly word game with a bunch of students that are just like you.” For many students, organizations like the Gaming Association offer more than recreation. They provide a small but vital escape—a way to decompress and remember that college life can still be playful.

After four years with MSTGA, Moeller says the club has helped her maintain balance and a sense of identity beyond academics. “Since we're so academically focused, I think we tend to be defined a lot by our majors,” she said, “but joining a club where you can just hang out and play games, it's a lot less ‘This is the computer engineering major’ and more ‘This is my friend who happens to be a CompE major.’” Joining a club helps turn other students from a them to an us.



Sydney Moeller (center) plays Chameleon with other members of the Missouri S&T Gaming Association.