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Virtual life: More satisfying than real life?

Author and former "game widow" explores gaming culture and addiction

SEATTLE - When *Wired* reported on a gang earlier this year that dubbed themselves "The Patriotic Nigras," readers were horrified. At the hands of the gang, properties had been vandalized, lives had been threatened and copycat groups had taken to mutilating pet animals. In the story, Manhattan resident Catherine Fitzpatrick went so far as to call the groups "terrorists" who personally cost her hundreds of U.S. dollars.

The kicker? It all happened on a video game. Or, more precisely, Second Life, one of the most popular MMORPG ("massive multiple online player role-playing games") out there.

Due to games like Second Life, World of Warcraft and others, the lines between virtual life and real life are indeed blurring. And in her new book *Game Widow* (Synergy Books, September 2008, ISBN 978-1-934454-26-8, \$14.95), gaming culture expert Wendy Kays explains why virtual life is so absorbing that real life can't compete. Designed to bridge the gap between those who game and those who don't, *Game Widow* offers valuable insight into the gaming community, and provides practical strategies for readers looking to reclaim some face time with their gaming spouse, friend or family member.

"A game widow is a woman whose husband might as well be dead to her because he is constantly engaged with video games," says Kays, once a game widow herself. "When I first heard this term, there was no information online or in the bookstore on what this problem meant or how to cope with it. Now, after almost seven years of marriage to a game designer, thousands of hours of experimental game play, and hundreds of conversations with developers, researchers, academics, psychologists, and medical personnel, I am ready to pass on the most important parts of what I've learned first-hand."

Endorsed by Dr. David Walsh, president of the National Institute on Media and the Family, Jason Della Rocca, executive director of the International Game Developers Association and many more, *Game Widow* is the go-to guide for anyone trying to understand the world of gaming behavior. With chapters detailing everything from game addiction to online relationships to the workaday life of a game developer, Kays' research sheds light on the real people behind the avatars - who they are, why they just can't log off, and how the rest of us can help.

In an interview, Kays is available to discuss such topics as:

- Game widows: Who are they, and how should they cope with a game-hooked loved one?
- The future of video games: Are *you* destined to become an avatar?
- Crackberry, Second Lifers and more: the truth behind tech addiction
- Gaming in a recession: How micro-transactions and virtual assets could be draining your bank account
- Beyond "pink" games: Why women aren't an easy target for the game industry
- Virtual currencies, Second Life properties and online job interviews: The blurring line between real and virtual life

Wendy Kays is married to Graham Kays, the lead designer of SOCOM: U.S. Navy Seals, who is now developing casual games for Real Networks. In addition to interviewing hundreds of game widows and game industry professionals, she has also consulted with the Internet/Computer Addiction Services and the Reality Quest Program, a team of nationally recognized counselors treating technology addiction in the Northwest. In the research for her book, Kays also admits to "quietly sneaking in on some professional game conferences." Her expertise on the game industry and gaming culture has been featured by numerous media outlets, including *The Seattle Times*. For more information, please visit www.gamewidow.org.

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To request a review copy of *Game Widow* or to set up an interview with Wendy Kays, please contact Tolly Moseley at (512) 478-2028 ext. 213 or tmoseley@phenixpublicity.com.