

# Wii Boards Boost Kids' Balance

By SHRINERS VILLAGE NEWS ARCHIVE

(HOUSTON) By cleverly linking five Wii Balance Boards, a team of Rice University students has combined the appeal of a video game with a computerized motion-tracking system to help patients at Shriners Hospital for Children® — Houston.

The engineering students created the new software and paired it with components of the popular Nintendo game system to create a balance training system. They are working with physical therapists and other staff at the Houston movement analysis lab to develop the game into a tool for therapy.

Many of the participating children, who are between the ages of 6 and 18, have cerebral palsy, spina bifida or amputations. What kids may see as a fun video game called "The Equilibrator" is really a sophisticated way to help develop their balance.

The Wii Balance Boards are lined up between handrails to keep the children safe. As kids move their feet, they activate creatures and movement in the game as they practice their balance.

## Making therapy fun

Steven Irby, an engineer at Shriners' Motion Analysis Laboratory, pitched the idea to Rice's

engineering professors. Irby said, "We are hoping to combine treatment for our patients in physical therapy with a fun game to keep them engaged and active."

Irby is pleased that the game requires patients to practice certain tasks, such as standing still, taking steps and balancing. Making these tasks fun has been helpful, he said, since the actions can be difficult for some children.

As kids step along the boards, they can shoot fireballs at approaching monsters by hitting particular spots with their feet. The game gets harder as the patient improves, and the chance to rack up points provides an incentive. "This is cool," exclaimed one patient as he tried out the game during therapy.

## Plans for the future

The system's components include a personal computer, the Wii boards and creative software. The students said their prototype cost far less than the \$2,000 they had budgeted. They purchased the Wii Balance Boards on eBay, and Rice supplied the software and students' creativity.

A further step, not yet implemented, would be to program feedback from the handrails into the



As kids move their feet on the Wii Balance Boards, they activate characters in a video game and practice their balance in the process.

game. Leaning on the rails would subtract points from the users' scores, encouraging them to improve their postures. The game would also present challenges specific to younger and older children to keep them engaged.



LYNN PUBLIC LIBRARY Staff Members. Jose Castilla, Paula Joyal and Noble Joshua Goodwin. Noble Goodwin works for the Lynn Public Library and the staff collects tabs for the Aleppo Shriners Children's Transportation Fund.

## Lynn Public Library Staff and the Knitting Club Collects Pull-Tabs

THE LYNN Public Library Knitting Club. Back row left to right is: **Joan Meese, Noble Joshua Goodwin, Ruth Coleman.** Front row left to right is: **Florence Hoey, Kitty Kane, Janet McGough and Mary Armstrong.**

The knitting club meets every Thursday from 10:00 to 12:00. They meet all year long then in December they have a Holiday Fair and they sell what they have knitted for they year and donate the profits to the Friends of the Library. Janet McGough is the widow of Wor. Ted McGough from Golden Fleece Lodge and was a member of Aleppo. Both groups have been saving pull-tabs to Noble Goodwin for the past three and a half years. He said they have given him 100lbs total.



## Aleppo Transportation News

By MARK NORTON

Hello Nobles!

We had a wonderful but busy summer. Our Shrine travels took us to Denver in July and Hyannis in August for the Imperial and North East Conventions. Captain **Mark Norton** and Sergeant **Arthur Weiner** travelled to Denver with the Cycle Unit for the Imperial Parade and Convention as well as Unit Competitions. We made fantastic time and enjoyed the wide open country without any mishaps or mechanical breakdowns. The scenery is beautiful in the mountains. We saw enough corn to last us the rest of our lives.

In August we joined our Potentate Illustrious **John E. Grant, Jr.**, for the North East Shrine Association Field Days. We had seven units in the Parade and Competitions and the Parade went on despite the hurricane warnings. The transportation was provided by Nobles **Ron Bushey, Rick Nighelli, Dave Frizzell, Larry Carroll, Bob Gaudet, Ted Critch** and Mark Norton. Thanks guys for the great weekend we shared on the Cape even though it was shortened by Hurricane Irene.

The Transportation Unit provided transportation for the hospital patients to attend unit parties and functions during the summer which is always a rewarding experience.

The Unit members also participated in all the Tours of Duty. Tractors were supplied by Parker Driving School through Noble Arthur Weiner, N.E. Drilling through Noble **Steven Ouellette**, Freebird Transportation through Nobel Ron Bushey and Noble Rick Nighelli and Noble Larry Carroll without whose assistance we would be unable to provide the transportation to get the Units to various events. A special thank you to these dedicated Nobles who give so generously of their time and equipment.

Many of our members enjoyed a wonderful time at a cookout hosted by Noble Rick Nighelli and Lady **Cynthia**. The day was beautiful, the food was delicious and the company was fantastic. Thanks again for opening your home to your Brothers of the Shrine and for all your hard work for a very enjoyable time.

Our get well wishes go out to Noble **Winson Snook** who recently had hip surgery and is now recuperating at home. We all miss you and hope to see you up and about real soon.

Thank you to all the Nobles who attended all the parades and functions during the year. The Shrine couldn't move without you.

Captain Mark H. Norton

*Greenberg's*  
**G** TRAIN AND  
 TOY SHOW

Nov. 19<sup>TH</sup> & 20<sup>TH</sup>  
 10:00 AM 'TIL 4:00 PM

