

Program makes learning fun

Posted By Heather Rivers, SENTINEL-REVIEW

A Woodstock woman has developed an innovative way of learning how to speak Canada's other official language.

Jenny Gray is founder of Watermelonworks, a company that has produced a new game called French Sounds.

Gray said the game makes it easy for students to understand and learn basic French sounds.

"I think it's fun and the kids I teach think it is fun," she said. "They think it is a game and don't realize they are learning."

Designed for beginners or those with a limited knowledge of the language, the game operates on three levels.

The first level is sound recognition, the second level blends consonants sounds with vowels and the third level is word building, Gray said.

Gray, a French tutor and bookkeeper, studied linguistics and literature at the University of Western Ontario.

"Linguistics is the study of language and how it is put together," she said. "I found linguistics absolutely fascinating. Language is my passion."

Gray compares understanding languages to mathematics.

"French is math -- everything has a place, an order," she said. "If it's not in the right spot, it's not right."

The creation of the game came out of her love of French and teaching French.

"The kids I tutor, there was a need. They didn't know their sounds," she said. "Some couldn't retain (them.)"

But the game is for anyone who wants to learn French.

"Anyone of any age can use this," she said.

Reaction from educators to the game have extremely positive, she said.

One professor even stated that use of the game will be widespread someday.

"French Sounds applies letter and sound matching to create a very effective tool for developing young beginning learners' reading and pronunciation skills in French as a second language," said Jeff Tennant, associate professor of French studies at UWO.

Gray said she plans to market the game at several upcoming conferences.

A Spanish version of the game is currently in development.

The game is available for \$34.95 plus shipping. Contact Gray 519-539-1902 or e-mail jgray@watermelon-works.com.

More information is available on the website www.watermelon-works.com.