

L'ÉCHO

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1500 personnes reçoivent la e-news. Nous avons des contacts avec un grand nombre d'organisations à Seattle. Ce qui veut dire qu'il y a toujours des choses à annoncer : événements, concours... C'est amusant mais aussi un peu difficile de gérer tout ça.

Etes-vous déjà allée en France ?

N.P. : J'ai étudié en France. J'ai fait des petits programmes, jamais de toute une année. J'ai fait des études à la Sorbonne pour étudiants étrangers. J'ai suivi des cours de civilisation française. J'ai également fait un programme à Nice pendant un été.

Avez-vous une ville favorite en France ?

J'adore Paris. J'aimerais y habiter un jour.

Qu'est-ce qui vous attire dans la culture française ?

N.P. : J'aime le mode de vie plus lent, même à Paris, qui est une ville assez mouvementée. Les gens prennent le temps d'apprécier les choses importantes dans la vie,

davantage que nous le faisons dans notre culture. Et j'adore cela. Même pour les petites choses : on fait des achats tous les jours, on va au marché tous les jours. On marche au lieu de prendre la voiture. Cela prend du temps mais j'adore ça. C'est un mode de vie plus calme même dans une grande ville comme Paris. Et j'adore la cuisine, la langue et la façon dont les gens aiment leur propre langue. La langue est quelque chose d'important dans la vie. Ce qui n'est pas le cas ici. On ne réfléchit jamais sur notre langue ici.

Que souhaitez-vous accomplir à l'Alliance ?

N. P. : Je souhaite vraiment continuer à travailler à l'Alliance. Pour l'instant, j'apprends ce qui se passe. J'aimerais avoir davantage d'aide, de stagiaires mais il faudrait un peu plus de ressources. Les stagiaires m'aident beaucoup. J'aimerais savoir ce que les membres veulent car je crois que si l'on savait ce qu'ils veulent, alors nous pourrions le mettre en place : plus d'événements, de dîners ou de concerts, par exemple.
Photo et propos recueillis par Caroline Planque



Michel Alvarez

Longtime member of the Alliance brings a sense of wonder to children through “unplugged edutainment.”

Michel Alvarez, Marie- Noëlle Thyron and their family are well known at the Alliance. They have been members since 1994, and Marie- Noëlle served until recently on the board of directors. Their wide range of interests has led them, besides their professional career, from promoting the children's programs at the Alliance for Marie- Noëlle, to creating a series of educational games for children 3 and older for Michel.

Michel was raised in Mexico near the California border. At the age of four, he started to learn how to play chess with a group of other children from a Mexican Chess Master. The training sessions were three to four-hour long and Michel remembers mostly being hungry, bored

and sometimes sleepy. But the training paid off. Soon enough, he started to really enjoy playing and went on competing and winning trophies until he quit at the age of ten. Later on he also realized that the practice had brought him the discipline of purely thinking for a long time. So when his son turned four and a half, he knew this was something he wanted to pass on to him.

But by then, he knew his son was also drawn to another magnet that did not exist when Michel was growing up: multimedia. Very quickly, Michel realized that he had to make the experience of learning how to play chess

Members

a fun one for his son, if he was to have any success at it. He created his own modified chess game where he could hide a little prize inside each of the chess pieces, therefore introducing the concept of wonder into the game. For this, this was like a revelation: "There is a lot of power about wondering what's inside as opposed to what you receive at the end. I recognized this when I did this experiment by putting something inside the chess piece and my son would wonder what's inside. He would shake it, feel it, just like you do with a gift. It's not about getting an immediate reward but an immediate reaction of wonder."

In 2004, while completing his MBA at the University of Washington, Michel created his own company and launched his first game: WonderChess. After making his first sale at a holiday bazaar in Ballard, he started getting many positive and encouraging reactions and literally started driving around, going door to door, to different toys store, to sell his product. Now in his seventh year, his products are sold in more than 200 stores nationwide and internationally including Barnes and Noble; he has received several awards including the NAPPA (National Parenting Publication Award) Gold Award. He has created several more games, all based on the same concept of "wondering what's inside" such as WonderCheckers, WonderGo, WonderLetters. This spring, he is also about to launch: WonderElla, a new memory game developed in cooperation with Michael Adams and Peter Sarrett, well-known experts in the game industry who designed Cranium® Cadoo® and Hullabaloo.

Michel knows that his games do not have the immediate appeal of battery powered multimedia gimmicks. But he also knows that they serve a nobler purpose that today, tends to be overlooked: family-oriented and brain building, they have a long shelf-life, and are designed to teach complete novices, both parents and kids. That's why Michel gets the most satisfaction when he receives emails from strangers telling him how they have learned to play a game with his method. So whether you are eager to learn how to play chess, go or checkers, curious about the new WonderElla - which was selected as "Toy of the Week" by Playthings Magazine (a national industry magazine) based in NY- or simply looking for a family or vacation game, look no more. They are all at: <http://www.wonderchess.com/>



And last but not least, if you buy one of the Wonder games you will be contributing to the WonderChess Kids Fund which donates to children's non-profit programs around the USA.
Caroline Planque



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The advertisement is on a black background with white text and graphics. At the top center is a white icon of a sun with rays. Below it, the text reads 'France...homestyle!' in a stylized font. Underneath that, it says 'Vacation Rentals. We will find the right place for you!'. At the bottom, the contact information is listed: '206.325.0132' and 'www.francehomestyle.com'. The entire ad is framed by a decorative border of white, teardrop-shaped patterns.