"Pokémon Go": Psyduck VS Psycho Players
Warnings for Retired School Personnel

by Judy Hart, Information and Protective Services Chairman

The new rage in gaming is "Pokémon Go." It hit the streets on July 6, 2016, and has made a huge splash with young and old alike charting 21 million daily active users within two weeks. Parents are raving about it because it means that their children are no longer <u>sitting</u> with their faces glued to a cellphone screen. Instead, they are up walking all over the cities and country sides, and truth be told, some of them came home from their first gaming adventure with sore legs, having walked eight miles or more. So why do we need to post about this instantaneously addictive game that requires our grandkids and even us more adventurous retirees to be walking?

First, let us understand the premise behind the game. The players need to capture all kinds of Pokémons with pokéballs. During the course of the game, the players earn candies, gymnasiums, and other fantastic awards that can be spent wastefully, recaptured from competitive other players or simply lost in the play of the game. Pokémon is a fictional creature concocted from the words pocket monsters. They have enticing names like the first characters the player is likely to meet named Charmander, Bulbasaur, and Squirtle. Paul Tassi (*Forbes*) recommends that players ignore these first Pokémons, even though they will chase after players, longing to be captured. When they finally give up, the more desirable pocket monster Pikachu arrives just in time for the ball chucker to earn pocket candy. Before players can hit the Pokémon with their curves and fastballs, they must locate said Pokémons using their gaming strategies and the phones GPS system.

Second, let us try to understand the concept of the game's technology along with some risks involved. The game uses augmented reality by blending reality with technology. The techno creature Roger Rabbit invaded a real studio world. A similar but higher technological invention now has these little pocket monsters appearing in the real world that players see through the cellphone's gaming camera on Google maps. Geocaching technology puts these creatures in the real world. Only no one can see these cute little monsters except through their cellphones. Herein lies a catastrophe waiting to happen. Children and adults following the Pokémons fail to look both ways before crossing streets, do not notice the stairs they need to walk down, or see the river they are about to step in. Players have been accused of invading and disrespecting Arlington Cemetery, Auschwitz, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, their neighbors' yards, and private meetings (Leonard Pitts, Jr.). The game has an agreement that must be contracted before permission to purchase the game. It states that gamers "play at their own risk; it is their responsibility to maintain health, liability, hazard, injury, medical, life, and other insurance policies." Imagine being told to purchase insurance prior to playing this child's game.

Next, let us examine extra risks outside the players' realm. Within 72 hours after the game was released, a malicious file repository service was uploaded in New Zealand and Australia. "Cybercriminals were cashing in on big opportunities." These criminals put up Trojanized versions of the app. (Nadia Kovacs [tagged as an Apple Genius blogger] *Norton Protection Blog*). Purchasers

of the game are warned to download from trusted sources only, such as Google Play Store and the Apple App Store. In fact, a fake lockscreen app named "Pokémon Go Ultimate" was found in the Google Play Store. That fake met its fate by being promptly deleted. Fake sites are offering Pokécoins and other power ups to unsuspecting players who hope to get free coins by filling out seemingly harmless surveys. These cyber crooks are gathering information to steal identities. They ask permission to access the player's phone and SMS capabilities, which gives them access to Google accounts, contacts, e-mails, Google profiles, and user IDs. When the player delivers these goods, he or she receives no Pokécoins!

Google also erroneously requested full access permission when they only need basic profiles like your user ID and your e-mail address. They are working on a client-side fix for this issue.
Fourth, Nadia Kovacs warns parents and grandparents to play with their children. The game is socially oriented. Anyone can set up lures called PokéStops. These public PokéStops last for thirty minutes and attract multiple Pokémons. Any player in the area hustles to the PokéStop and tries to capture as many Pokémons as possible. Almost instantly a Pokémon flash mob materializes. Kovac warns that children need to be accompanied when going into these areas because child predators can set up the stops, luring children to them. In fact, the FBI has warned that all child predators will break their probation if they are caught with the game on their cellphones.

Fifth, parents can purchase a location app that tracks the child's smartphone, iOS and Androids in real time with GPS coordinates on a map. And while parents are trying to keep up with their children, they may consider another app that Apple promotes called "Ask to Buy." The app alerts the parents when a child or teen initiates a new purchase or free download. From their own devices, parents can reject the purchase or download (Kovacs). They may save their credit card from a quick $1,000 purchase.

Another caveat is that players must agree to "Trainer Guidelines," which they do not know prior to agreeing to the guidelines. The player may be penalized, flagged, or terminated for breaking the guidelines (Kovacs).

What does all this have to do with retirees? "We come from the generation," according to Leonard Pitts, Jr., "that invented the youth culture. We spat in the face of aging." We still play games too. It was a mature adult male, who ran his pickup into two police parked vehicles. He sheepishly explained that he was chasing Pokémons. My mature adult son confessed that he, too, was driving down the highway chasing pocket monsters. Need I say, please do not drive and chase Psyduck, and while you are driving, watch out for those "mature adult Pokémon" chasers.

Kovacs, Nadia. "Pokémon Go: Cyber Security and Security Risks." "Pokémon Go Parents' Guide for Children." Pokémon Go Real World Risks and Safety Tips." *Norton Protection   Blog*. Internet. July 15, 2016.
Pitts, Jr. Leonard. "People Should Not Play Pokémon at Auschwitz." *Amarillo Globe-News.* July 18, 2016. A-11.
Tassi, Paul. "Ten Things I Wish I Knew When I Started 'Pokémon Go'." *Forbes*. Internet. July 9, 2016.