



## App-ed to Find a Parking Space?

Drivers in big cities will tell you that finding a parking place on the street is like searching for a needle in a haystack. **Eric Meyer** '12 is one of them. Last spring, he launched Haystack, a new smartphone app for frustrated city motorists.

The idea struck him in December 2013. "I was tired of circling the block late at night searching for a spot in my Baltimore neighborhood," Meyer says. "After too many tickets, I thought there must be a more efficient way for drivers to park and exchange information with their neighbors."

Haystack is a social parking community that lets drivers exchange street spots in real time via a free smartphone application. Users download the app from the iOS or Android store, sign up with their car and credit card information, and begin using the service.

"Haystackers" can either be seeking or providing a tip about an available spot. The parties are matched to spaces based on proximity and car length. To offer a tip—which users will often do as

they are leaving a spot—they indicate the location and type of spot they are about to leave and are paired with a nearby seeker. The users can communicate to smooth the exchange.

While Haystack enjoyed a smooth launch in Baltimore last May—Meyer was named a 2014 Innovator of the Year by Maryland's *Daily Record* and Haystack won Best New Web or Mobile Product at Technical.ly Baltimore's Innovation Week—it hit a roadblock in Boston. The city banned the app in August, charging that Haystack and its users are private parties profiting from a public resource. Haystack retains a 25 percent transaction fee on parking exchanges and the average exchange is about \$3.

Meyer counters that the app sells information, not parking spaces. A political science major at Rochester, he says one of his biggest challenges hasn't been technical, but political: that is, "navigating the archaic network of backward-thinking governments."

"Urban parking is a critical issue, and we need innovative





**PARK TECH:** Meyer wants to harness smartphones to alleviate the headaches of big city parking.

companies and city governments to work together to find effective solutions,” says Meyer, who has offered to work with Boston city officials to devise a mutually agreeable solution.

In those discussions, “Eric worked the room like an old pro,” says Lawrence DiCara, a partner at the law firm Nixon Peabody, who in the 1970s won a spot on the Boston City Council at the age of 22. “He knows that no city government can solve transportation problems on its own.”

Meyer is a serial entrepreneur. He launched his first registered business at 14, producing professional videos. A year later he started the Geneseo Summer Scholars day camp, the first iteration of Young Scholar Adventures, LLC. He also learned the ropes in a corporate environment, directing beverage programs and promotions for Phillips Seafood Restaurants, a \$50 million company.

“Creating something new is incredibly exciting,” he says. “It’s that excitement I suppose that has driven my interest in a diversity of fields,” he says, rattling off problems he sees in the restaurant business, entrepreneurship education, and of course, parking. “Bringing people together to solve these problems is what gets me out of bed in the morning.”

—JOHN MARTIN ’69

## In the News

### New Leadership at an Iconic TV Brand

The National Geographic Channel has someone new in charge of programming: **Tim Pastore** ’00, ’02 (MA) was named president of original programming and production last August.

Pastore had been employed at National Geographic Studios for about a year before he was promoted into his new role, part of a wider overhaul in leadership at the channel.

Pastore got his first big break in television as producer of Discovery Channel’s *The Deadliest Catch*, for which he was nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award for outstanding nonfiction series in 2007. In 2010, he was nominated a second time for a Primetime Emmy, this time for *Dirty Jobs*, in the category of outstanding reality program.

Pastore has been an executive producer for *Life Below Zero*, *Flying Wild Alaska*, *Dual Survival*, *Gold Rush*, and other series.

### Dual Honors for Expert on Longevity

**Laura Carstensen** ’78—author of *A Long Bright Future* (Broadway Books), a TED speaker, and founding director of the Stanford Center on Longevity—received two awards from the Gerontological Society of America. A psychologist, she’s the only person ever to receive both awards simultaneously.

Carstensen earned the Robert W. Kleemeier Award for outstanding research in gerontology, and the Distinguished Mentorship in Gerontology Award.

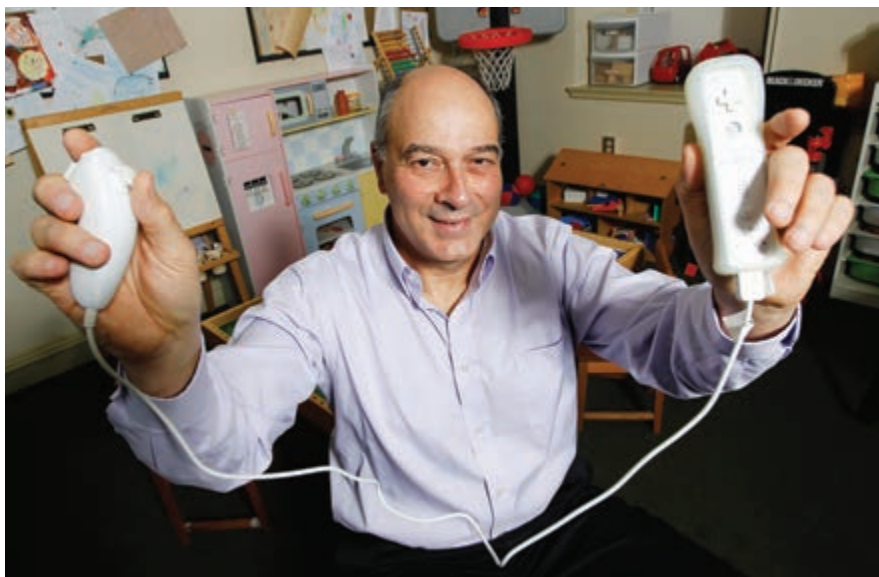
In *A Long Bright Future*, Carstensen debunked the notion that aging Americans are destined to drain the nation’s financial resources. Her own findings suggested that an increasing number of Americans over age 65 enjoy good health and maintain skills that are valuable to society.

She’s also found that older Americans are happier, on the whole, than younger ones. She is considered the founder of socioemotional selectivity theory, which posits that as people grow older, they become more selective in their commitments, investing more time and resources in emotionally gratifying experiences, and often paring down their social circles.

In addition to her role at the Stanford Center on Longevity, Carstensen is a professor of psychology and the Fairleigh S. Dickinson Jr. Professor in Public Policy, also at Stanford.



**WINNER:** Carstensen developed a noted theory on aging.



**TECH TRANSFER:** Kulman helps patients translate skills honed in video games to real life.

## The Untapped Power of Digital Play

About 10 to 15 years ago, **Randy Kulman** '77 started noticing a distinct trend in his clinical psychology practice. "Time and again, every day, I was seeing these kids who didn't seem to like doing anything, didn't seem to pay attention to anything, and seemed to have no persistence," he says. "But they liked to play video games. And they were really good at it. And they were the technology leaders in the house."

As Kulman started to learn more about video games and other forms of digital play, he found that many popular games actually required several of the skills—the related skills of planning, organization, time management, focus, and persistence that psychologists call executive functioning skills—that the kids in his practice struggled with in their daily lives.

That discovery led him to a couple of big questions. Why are kids who struggle with executive functioning skills at school and at home able to master those skills in the context of video games? And how might those kids learn to transfer skills mastered in video games to other areas of their lives?

Kulman, who is not a gamer himself—"there are very few games that I really enjoy playing," he says—developed a strong academic interest in play while at Rochester. Under the tutelage of Ralph Barocas and David Elkind, author of *The Hurried Child*, Kulman decided to pursue graduate study, where in his first major research project, "I was looking at the impact of watching *Sesame Street* versus *Mister Rogers* on imaginative play," he says.

Kulman is founder of an educational consulting firm, LearningWorks for Kids, and has written two books: *Train Your Brain for Success: A Teenager's Guide to Executive Functions* (Specialty Press, 2012) and *Playing Smarter in a Digital World: A Guide to Choosing and Using Popular Video Games and Apps to Improve Executive Functioning in Children and Teens* (Specialty Press, 2014).

### What do some kids love about video games?

I think there are a lot of things. First, the games are adaptive. You

get to a level and then they challenge you to get to the next one. They get harder and harder, but only at the level that you're able to handle. They also teach through trial and error. It's OK to fail, because that's how you learn to play the game. The games also give immediate feedback. The best kind of feedback, the feedback that works best to help these kids to learn or to grow, takes place right when something happens, not half an hour later. Video games are also multimodal, so some of these kids who struggle with learning who might not read very well, or when they're listening, that input channel is not as effective as others, don't have to rely on just one channel of learning. There are sounds, actions, and pictures.

### How can video games teach kids executive functioning?

Video game play alone has limited impact on improving executive functioning,

though kids will often get much better at using these skills in the context of the game. That's why in my practice we connect games with talking points, and then give what we call a "make-it-work" section, to help a kid to take the skill that he used in the game, think about that skill, reflect on it, and then do activities that take that same skill in the real world. And that's why we give information to parents, teachers, and clinicians about how they can help their kids think about the skills they use in the game and then give activities in which they actually use those skills in the real world.

### Is there such a thing as too much digital play?

Certainly. I like to talk about a healthy play diet. There are basically five types of play: what I call active, physical play; social play, which involves doing things directly with other people; unstructured play; creative play that's a bit more structured, involving artistic pursuits; and digital play. A healthy play diet includes all five kinds of play. —INTERVIEW BY KAREN MCCALLY '02 (PHD)

## Top Picks

Kulman has rated hundreds of games and apps for their potential to help kids hone executive skills. He's assigned each an "LQ" (learning quotient) from 1 to 10. Here are a few of his top picks.

Game	LQ	Executive Skills
Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword	9.8	Focus, planning, self-control
Portal 2	9.7	Flexibility, planning
LittleBIGPlanet	9.6	Flexibility, organization
BrainPOP/BrainPOP Jr.	9.5	Flexibility, self-awareness
Minecraft	9.5	Flexibility, focus, organization, planning, time management
Angry Birds Star Wars	9.3	Flexibility, planning
Bad Piggies	9.3	Flexibility, planning
Gamestar Mechanic	9.3	Flexibility, planning, time management
Plants vs. Zombies	9.3	Flexibility, planning, time management

SOURCE: [www.learningworksforkids.com](http://www.learningworksforkids.com); Kulman, *Playing Smarter in a Digital World* (Specialty Press)





FROM CT TO TNR: Leber, once at the *Campus Times*, now writes for *The New Republic*.

## Quick Study

**Rebecca Leber** '11 is already an old pro at *The New Republic*.

"I find it pretty amazing to be working here," says Leber, who this past June became the venerable policy and culture magazine's newest staff writer.

Her rise at the century-old magazine, also known by the acronym *TNR*, was remarkably fast, even by the standards of the ever-changing world of digital media. As a staff writer, Leber has a dual focus: subject-specific policy journalism focused on energy, the environment, and climate change; and improving the magazine's digital content.

"We are so pleased Rebecca is joining the team," said senior editor Jonathan Cohn, in announcing her appointment. "She's smart, she cares, and she knows her stuff. Readers are going to look forward to seeing her byline."

Like many young journalists, Leber rose in the profession in tandem with the rise of digital media. At her previous job at the digital news and opinion outlet ThinkProgress, she worked on the team that helped the site gain one million Facebook fans, and edited their Tumblr, a blogging network and social media platform that takes advantage of multimedia formats.

"I was part of the social media unit, and that experience made me think a lot about what drives people to share stories with their friends and family," she says. As part of her job, Leber will also write for *Q.E.D.*, a domestic politics and policy offshoot that *The New Republic* rolled out this summer.


"*Q.E.D.* is staying on top of major policy news, and thinking of interesting ways to present information visually. *TNR* has been

expanding its digital and social media presence for the last couple of years. *Q.E.D.* is really focused on extending that to policy journalism."

As a journalist focused on energy and the environment, she says, "I write a lot about the constant political battles over environmental regulations, particularly the Obama administration's new regulations on how much energy we get from coal in this country. Increasingly, I'm focused on how the world is moving forward on climate change in the next year."

Leber has a clear notion about what needs to be looked at more deeply and brought to the attention of the public and policy makers. She says politicians are beginning to do a better job, but could "connect the dots" more between climate change and the impact it has now, and will have in the near future, on policy. "Hurricane Sandy was an example of politicians realizing that coastal infrastructure needs to be able to sustain more flooding and extreme weather," she says. "It's the same for other areas, like drought and water scarcity. There just aren't great solutions out there right now."

"What I'm trying to do, personally, is to write timely pieces on both big news topics and less-covered areas—with something unique to say each time, or context to add."

She's convinced that good writing stands out in either print or digital format. This year, as part of the magazine's 100-year anniversary, *The New Republic* is publishing many of its best archive pieces online. "A lot of those are surprisingly successful on the Internet," she says. 

—JOHN MARTIN '69