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## **Keeler creates board game**

*Summary: Are you tired of playing Parcheesi and Scrabble? Have you already memorized the answers to most versions of Trivial Pursuit? If so, you might want to try a new board game called "Honest Abe vs. the Xenopods."*

(April 20, 2006)-Are you tired of playing Parcheesi and Scrabble? Have you already memorized the answers to most versions of Trivial Pursuit? If so, you might want to try a new board game called "Honest Abe vs. the Xenopods."

"Honest Abe," a board game created by Len Keeler, assistant professor of physics at the University of Minnesota, Morris, has been around about six years. It has a "humans vs. aliens" concept in fact the original name of the game was "Aliens." But, said Keeler, it would have been difficult to market considering the movie by the same name.

The shake-the-dice, move-the-pieces game, designed for two to five players ages eight years and older, has some differences compared to similarly played board games. "The way the humans pieces play is different from the way the aliens play," said Keeler. "Aliens have to decide how to divide their time whether to make more aliens or whether to be aggressive. Humans, on the other hand, have to be more efficient e.g., be aggressive without taking too many risks." Humans can teleport humans from other ships. This is a risky move, said Keeler, as they could accidentally import another alien instead of a human.

What, one may wonder, do a physics professor and a board game have in common? "As a researcher, I spend time programming, using a set of rules. I've applied those thought processes to this socially-centered game," explained Keeler.

Indeed it's a game of strategy, said Keeler. "It has enough degrees of freedom to keep it interesting, yet it's challenging like 'Risk.' It also has a degree of silliness and fun."

While Keeler is developing a second game, he has yet to mass-produce "Honest Abe." He has constructed each game individually, printing and assembling them himself. Although he's sold about 20 games, it's expensive, he said, to mass-produce them. "The next printing would cost about \$1,000." Keeler doesn't know when he will produce more of this game, but expects he needs to sell the games beyond just the community of Morris. The game had its debut recently at John's Total Entertainment in downtown Morris.

For more information about the game contact Keeler at [keelerl@morris.umn.edu](mailto:keelerl@morris.umn.edu) For those who like a new game challenge, "it's a well thought-out game that plays well," said Keeler. "After six years, the game still leads to surprises and is still fun to play."

Photo: Students take a break before class to play "Honest Abe." [photo by Nicole Herberg]

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