



## Global Game Giant Boasts New Iowa Address

### JAM CITY

San Francisco, Seattle, San Diego, Buenos Aires. And, most recently, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

That's the list of creative studio venues for global game developer Jam City. The mobile gaming powerhouse recently made Iowa the home of its first studio outside the Pacific time zone.

"Top talent drives our industry," said Josh Yguado, Jam City's co-founder and president. "To be honest, it can be easy to overlook talent that's not in your backyard. That's not a mistake we're making, so we're hiring the best and brightest where we find them, and Iowa is one area whose talent—and technological infrastructure—we're not ignoring."

Based in Los Angeles, Jam City's titles include Panda Pop, Juice Jam, Family Guy: The Quest for Stuff, Marvel Avengers Academy and megahit Cookie Jam, named Game of the Year by Facebook in 2014. People play Jam City games more than 30,000 times a minute in every part of the world.

The Cedar Falls, Iowa team recently developed for Jam City and FoxNext Games a new match-3 puzzler, dubbed Family Guy: Another Freakin' Mobile Game! Available to download for free through the Apple Store and Google Play worldwide.

The Iowa studio happened because three developers Jam City wanted to hire live in Cedar Falls, preferred to stay, and pitched the idea to company leadership.

"They had to be convinced," recalls lead software engineer Nick Cash. "They asked all the questions typical of a coastal lack of awareness about the Midwest. 'Is there decent cell service? Is there an airport?'"

For Nick and fellow developers Ray Ryan and Dan Cash, the pitch came down to connectivity and economics.

Jam City's Cedar Falls team uses all-fiber gigabit Internet service from a pioneering community-owned provider, Cedar Falls Utilities (CFU). Nick says the other offices are jealous.

"In our industry, the joke is, 'Well, I'm waiting for my code to compile,'" said Nick Cash. "But one of the perks of living in Cedar

Falls, Iowa is our gigabit Internet. If we have Skype connection issues during our daily standup, it's always on the Silicon Valley end. We tell them we have 'corn-fed' bandwidth here in Cedar Falls."

With better connectivity, the Cedar Falls team saves time on routine tasks. "Every time there's a game engine update, we have to reinstall the program – and this happens fairly frequently," says Dan Cash. "It takes our other offices about half a day to get an update downloaded and installed. It takes us about 7 minutes!"

By hiring in place, Jam City saved relocation expenses and ongoing occupancy costs. The Iowa team works in Cedar Falls' Mill Race co-working center, where permanent and drop-in workspace accommodates a growing number of knowledge workers employed locally or remotely.

The Iowa team sees lower costs as a win-win for employee and employer. It puts less pressure on the salary scale, helping the employer stay cost-competitive. Yet the Cedar Falls developers can afford homes just minutes away from work by car or bike. "For me, living and working in Cedar Falls, Iowa was a better alternative to the high rents and congestion of other tech communities," said Dan Cash. "Quality of life is high and cost of living is low. With housing as affordable as it is here, I'm keeping more of my paycheck!"

Jam City leaders now showcase the Iowa studio as proof that you don't need to be on the Coast or in Austin to make globally popular software and games.

For its part, the Cedar Falls studio team thinks they've made the case for finding talent where it lives.

"It's not that anybody thought we couldn't do it," says Nick. "They just had no frame of reference. So our challenge was to prove it out, make sure we have the right people in the right place. And I think we've delivered because we've already added more members to the Cedar Falls, Iowa studio team."