

From the Belleville News Democrat, 1/7/05

Edwardsville woman named to task force

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With a 10-year-old son, Debra Niebur is constantly watching out for what type of video games he plays.

Now she'll be able to put that experience to work for Gov. Rod Blagojevich, who this week appointed Niebur to his Safe Games Illinois Task Force. The group will gather information about the impact of violent and sexually explicit video games on children and make recommendations to the governor.

"I'm so busy," said Niebur, 46, wife of Edwardsville Mayor Gary Niebur. "I don't have time to sit and watch every video. That's one reason why I do rely on the ratings."

She added, "Parents are so busy today that they have to have a valid rating system."

Niebur was contacted by a representative from the governor's office about the task force after being nominated by state Rep. Jay Hoffman, D-Collinsville.

She said video games have changed.

"It's a little different from what it was many years ago, it's so much more realistic," Niebur said. "I think I was asked to give a parent's perspective, being a mother of four. I do have a lot of experience in that."

Blagojevich said the task force will be able to "do some of the important research and groundwork that most parents and caretakers don't have time to do themselves."

As part of the task force, a parents' advisory committee will collect input from parents around the state.

"I think it's wonderful that they value my opinion as a parent," Niebur said.

Blagojevich said he plans to introduce bills this year banning the distribution, sale, rental and availability of violent and sexually explicit video games to children younger than 18.

Niebur expects the task force's first meeting will be later this month.

Erin Kern, the wife of St. Clair County Board Chairman Mark Kern, was appointed to the task force earlier.