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NEWS

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**Child's play with a futuristic twist:
You hide in a virtual world, they seek you
in the real one. Your only hope? Run.**

TAG, 2.0

BY ANDREW HERRMANN
Staff Reporter

Chaz Evans stands at the corner of Delaware and Michigan, braced against a cold wind. Erica Knox is a few feet away, though coatless and cozy. And the chase is on.

Except that while Evans actually is at the Near North location, Erica is there only virtually — in the form of a computer image that she controls from inside the Museum of Contemporary Art.

A high-tech game of tag called "Can You See Me Now?", in its U.S. debut, is unfolding in Chicago this weekend and includes players participating from around the world.

How to hunt the invisible

It works like this:

A handful of flesh-and-blood "chasers" equipped with global positioning satellite technology, like the 22-year-old Evans, venture into Chicago's streets. Meanwhile, players log in — at home or at the MCA — where they find a virtual Near North neighborhood that mirrors the real one, and a digital icon of themselves.

Both sides, through their own technology, can see each other if they come close enough. If the real-life chaser gets within 15 feet of the player's position in the match-



Chasers Gragasin (from left), Chaz Evans, 22, and Peter Kersten, 24, prepare to take to the streets.

ing virtual neighborhood, the player is out.

Erica, a 12-year-old from

Edgewater, lasted about three minutes Friday before being caught, though she allowed, "it's still cool." But veteran players can survive as long as an hour and half, ducking around cartoon-like buildings and scampering through computer-generated alleys as the real-life chasers try to track them.

Developed by the British artistic group Blast Theory and the University of Nottingham, the games have been staged in England, the Netherlands, Ger-

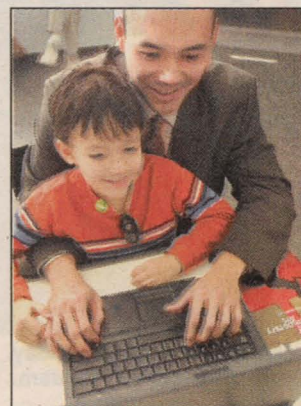
many, Japan and Canada.

Chasers can tire out

The Chicago series, which continues between 1 and 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, is part of the MCA's new technology-focused exhibit, "Massive Change: The Future of Global Design."

Blast Theory co-founder Matt Adams said the mouse-wielding players may have the advantage: they don't break a sweat. Out in the actual world, the chasers "can run five to 10 miles in a game," he said.

To play, go to www.mca.chicago.org.



James Sison and his son Orest, 6, evade chasers from inside the MCA.



Real-world chasers use a hand-held GPS device like this one.



Angeline Gragasin, 21, hunts virtual players near Chicago and Chestnut streets. —THOMAS DELANY JR./SUN-TIMES PHOTOS