In the heart of Waynesburg, Roger Smalley is on a mission to keep gaming nostalgia alive while also hinting towards something new, exciting, and beneficial for the community.

Smalley, the owner of Games-Ago, has spent years repairing, selling, and trading video games, building a business that thrives on customer interaction and a love for classic gaming.

His love for video games started when he was a kid, but it wasn’t until he turned 20 that he really got into collecting and repairing older consoles and cartridges. It all began with a lucky break at a flea market, when an older man handed him some broken gaming equipment, giving him the perfect chance to hone his repair skills.

Coincidentally, that man ended up being the now-former Games-Ago owner, Ernie Kelley. Over time, Smalley developed his knowledge, working with and learning from him.

“I started fixing stuff with him, and then I’d come down every couple of months,” Smalley said. “Then, you know, I started getting deeper and deeper into repairs. And then he made me a manager five years later. And then just three years ago, [Ernie] gave the store to me.”

Over the past fifteen years, Smalley and Kelley became “best friends," sharing a mutual appreciation for gaming and the business. When he took over the store three years ago, Smalley made plans to move Games-Ago from about 30 miles east in Dunbar to Waynesburg, continuing Kelley’s legacy.

Unlike big-box retailers, Games-Ago is more than just a place to buy and sell games.It’s more than just a store. It’s a place for conversation, nostalgia, and connection.

Gamers from across Western Pennsylvania visit not just to buy and sell but to relive memories and enjoy the welcoming atmosphere Smalley has built.

“This place has really pushed me out of my comfort zone,” Smalley said. “People come in, and we’ll talk for hours. And most of the time, it’s not even about video games. It’s about life.”

His business is built on honesty and transparency. When customers bring in games to sell, he takes the time to carefully assess their value, offering fair prices and explaining the whole process.

“I don’t go out looking for stuff like I used to,” Smalley said. “Nowadays, everyone has a phone that can scan barcodes and look up values. So when someone comes in with a game, I write down the value and offer them 45 to 50 percent of what I sell it for. If it’s something rare, I’ll go up to 70 percent. If you’re honest, that’s where you build relationships.”

Frequent customers like Daniel Rogers appreciate the unique experience Games-Ago offers, from its pricing transparency to its wide selection.

“I like that they have a lot of variety and how they cover every kind of system. Any game that you can imagine, they have,” Rogers said. “It’s kind of a dream come true for those gamers that like to play old and new stuff.”

Kelley’s influence is evident in the way Smalley runs Games-Ago.

Smalley described Kelley as an “old-school” businessman. Kelley believed in cash transactions and personal connections. Smalley has taken those principles and blended them with modern business practices to create a space that fits seamlessly into the fabric of Waynesburg.

“Certain stores fail because they stopped taking old stuff and lost that personal touch with customers,” Smalley said. “You need people who actually care about what they’re doing.”

The name Games-Ago itself is a nod to nostalgia, which came from Kelley’s love for Atari and his sentiment that those games were from “ages ago.”

While video games remain his passion, Smalley saw another opportunity to serve the community through food.

Three years ago, he purchased the building that houses his store, knowing that it had previously been a deli.

Inspired by childhood memories and Phil’s Corner Store in Uniontown, he decided to bring the deli back to life.

“When I first moved here, I never planned on opening a deli,” Smalley said. “But I saw the building, and I thought, ‘You know what? I’d like to open up a deli.’ So we started remodeling, got some equipment, and we’re almost ready to go.”

The deli aims to focus on affordability, offering high-quality subs at reasonable prices, much like the businesses that influenced him. He also plans to implement an EBT program to ensure that everyone in the community can enjoy a good meal.

“We’re going to do stuff for the college, too. And it’s going to be good for the town,” Smalley said. “I’m not a restaurant guy, but I know good food and good prices bring people together.”

Rogers, who's a Waynesburg University student, is intrigued by the deli’s potential to add to the college experience.

“If they could do that, yeah, I would be interested in that,” Rogers said.

Balancing Games-Ago, the deli, and personal life is no easy feat. Smalley and his wife, Ashley, run the store together, but their time physically together is scarce.

“Luckily, she works remotely, so she can be here,” Smalley said. “But when I leave work, I come straight here. People drop off stuff for repairs, and I get to work. It’s probably the biggest challenge.”

Smalley’s brother is expected to eventually run the day-to-day operations at the deli once it gets up and running. While Smalley aims for a summer opening, an exact date has yet to be finalized.

But his ambitions don’t stop at a deli and a game shop. If the deli takes off, he hopes to open a firearms business and offer fire protection services, like fire extinguishers and alarm inspections.

Outside of his full-time job working at Games-Ago, Smalley also works about 35 hours a week in fire protection.

“I just like working with my hands,” Smalley said. “Whether it’s repairing a game console or running a business, I just want to make enough to support myself and give back to the community.”

Games-Ago remains a part of his life, but Smalley is eager to expand, all to benefit the community he has spent the last few years immersing himself in.

“For me, it’s all about the people,” Smalley said. “That’s what keeps me going.”