



Photos by Louise Wrege / HP staff

Ring of Steel members Diane Barbeau, left, and Rebecca Garbor act out a fight Saturday at Fandom Fest at Lake Michigan College in Benton Township. Ring of Steel is a theatrical combat stunt troupe from Ann Arbor.

GEEKS RULE

at inaugural 'Fandom Fest'

By LOUISE WREGE
HP Staff Writer

BENTON TOWNSHIP — Batman and Captain America rubbed elbows with deadmau5 and a variety of Star Wars characters Saturday at Fandom Fest at Lake Michigan College in Benton Township.

"I think this is fantastic for a free event on a Saturday," said Jason Sabo of St. Joseph, who brought his two young children. "The kids are having a ball. They couldn't wait to dress up in their costumes."

More than 300 people attended the event, said one of the organizers, interim Benton Harbor Library Director Kat Boyer. Besides her library, the event was sponsored by the public libraries of St. Joseph, Bridgman, Coloma, Lincoln Township, South Haven and Three Oaks Township.

"It's going great — better than I had ever imagined," she said. "We've heard nothing but positive feedback. People are already ready to mark it on their calendar for next year."

Boyer held a mini-version of the event called "Geeky Con" last summer at her library. She said the other library directors jumped at the chance to organize a larger event.

This was the first of two Fandom Fests. The second will be noon-5 p.m. April 15 at the Cass District Library in Cassopolis. Helping Cass organize the second event are the public libraries of Dowagiac, Eau Claire and Berrien Springs.

More than 20 organizations set up booths includ-



Arthur Mamouzellos, 2, of Benton Harbor, dressed as Pikachu, takes a break on the shoulder of his dad, Will Mamouzellos, Saturday during Fandom Fest at Lake Michigan College in Benton Township. Helping his dad look over items is Raymond Slavin from Topps Trade Center in Benton Township.



Benton Harbor Library Interim Director Kat Boyer, left, talks with Vincent Wilson of Benton Harbor during Saturday's Fandom Fest at Lake Michigan College in Benton Township. Boyer is dressed as Victor Frankenstein from "Frankenweenie." Wilson is dressed as Rainbow Dash from "My Little Pony."

ing the Northern Darkness the love of "Star Wars" and Garrison, the northern Indiana chapter of the 501st Legion, a nonprofit that promotes charity through the passion of costuming, said Kayla Martin of South Bend, who was dressed as Princess Leia.

She said the organization is endorsed by Lucasfilm and anyone can join the chapter as long as they are at least 18 and have a screen-accurate costume. She said they can help build a screen-accurate costume for interested people.

More information can be found at NDGarrison.com.

Another big draw was a demonstration by Ring of Steel, an action theater and stunt troupe from Ann Arbor. Topps Trade Center in Benton Township had a booth and a gaming area.

"I love it," said Jule Laurent of St. Joseph, who had a booth promoting a children's book she wrote, "Lola and Laslo Into the Woods." "Everyone is welcome to be who they are. Everybody is supportive of letting each other's freak flag fly."

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