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RodCon: Bringing the Community Together with Comics

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RODCON: BRINGING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER WITH COMICS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CRUSH
Cedar Rapids Ultimate Super Heroes
Northeast Iowa Food Bank Drive

Day of Service
Habitat for Humanity

Cedar Falls & Waterloo
Public Library events

Ready Player One
&
80's Trivia

Day of Service
Northeast Iowa food bank

Free and open to the public
to ensure a vibrant attendance by
the surrounding community
members

Collection for
Cedar Bend Humane
Society at RodCon!

"I want to thank you for providing such a fun, enjoyable event. It is great knowing the community and campus support RodCon. I attend yearly and look forward to it every year like a holiday."
- RodCon attendee feedback

RODCON, annual free comic-con, aims to provide an engaging, dynamic event that celebrates comic books, pop culture, and their contributions to academia and literacy. Attendees have access to comics in a way they haven't before where they get to interact with and purchase work from comic book authors and artists, show off their wearable art in our costume contests, channel their inner artist and create kid-friendly art or stop motion videos, and engage in conversations at panel discussions on a wide variety of topics that investigate the intersectionality of comics and race, gender, sexuality, and equality. Since RodCon's beginning in 2014, this free and family-friendly event has brought over 3,000 people to the UNI campus and Rod Library each year.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM RODCON HISTORY

- Working with high school art teachers to host an art contest
- Wall of comic art where community submissions are encouraged
- Local elementary school comic book contest
- Chick tracts lecture for Darwin Week
- Pre-Con panels open to public (EX. Women in comics)
- Comic book drive for local school donation

LEARNING WITH COMICS

RodCon engages learning with comics for all ages. The use of comics in classrooms can benefit the struggling reader, language learners, college students, teachers and all of us. Comics have a way of breaking down complex issues, sparking interests and viewing what is happening in the world with a unique lens.

"Thank you for doing this! I think it helps to draw people to campus who might not otherwise be there. I also think it's an incredible family event and a great opportunity for local artist and vendors."
- RodCon attendee feedback

"This was my second year of attending and I thought it was another great event!! I think it is great when our local state university includes the general public to enjoy family friendly free events. Keep up the great work."
- RodCon attendee feedback

"As a faculty member/teacher educator, I am seek examples of how K-12 students show their talents, strengths and creativity. Then I do the work to explain to undergraduates how they might tap into that positive energy in the classroom. Rod con is a perfect outlet to explore multi-modal literacy in our community. Working with the norm of difference as a foundation is essential to meeting student needs."
- Sarah Vander Zanden, associate professor, curriculum & instruction

DIVERSITY IN COMICS

RODCON features a strong commitment to presenting issues related to diversity. We were awarded UNI Diversity grants which allowed us to bring speakers to campus and to purchase diversity related DVD's for pre-con activities. Some of the areas addressed have been: Women in Gaming; The History of Black Comics; Racism in Disney; the Holocaust and Genocide representations in comics, Depiction of Muslim Women in Comics, Superman is Jewish, Comics and Graphic Novels dealing with Genocide and Human Rights, Disability in Comics, The Queer History of the Fantastic Four; Cosplay for Plus Sizes; Censorship of Anime and Manga, and the History of Lolita Fashion.

"... northern_iowa does a great job every year of expanding the con, being #familyfocused and #inclusive..."
- RodCon tweetwall

We collaborate with several campus groups including UNI Swordfighting, the American Chemical Society student group, Panther Parents, UNI Anime Club, UNI STEM, UNI TAPP, UNI School of Music, UNI College of Education, UNI Gender and Sexuality Services, UNI Art, UNI Sociology, Anthropology and Criminology, UNI Panther e-Sports, Spectrum Project, and UNI Communication Studies.

Through campus partnerships, RodCon provides a platform for UNI students to apply what they are learning in the classroom and engage with the community in ways that expand beyond the classroom.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

"I think it's amazing that you guys take the time to do something for the community at large, when you're really under no obligation to do so as a college facility. The vendor floor is great and I love that you featured women in comics this year, but to me (and my 5 year old) the crafts are where it's at."
- RodCon attendee feedback

"Educator Preparation students (Literacy Education Minors) expressed a deeper understanding about "family relationships—I saw how hard it was for a mom to explain how to make the stress ball and how easy it was for the kids!" and another expressed shock at "how broad diversity can be...who knew spider man, Darth Vader and a Death Eater would come to make art?!"

"I think that the most important take aways for my students who were involved in the preparation and volunteering learned to create art projects which connect to literacy and engage families to create together. The students gained great experience interacting with families and learning about pop culture interests in our community young and old."
- Wendy Miller, associate professor, art

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

RODCON has featured groups such as the Cedar Glen Pipes and Drums, University of Iowa Quidditch team, the Des Moines Science Fiction Society, the Prairie Rose Middle Eastern Dance Troupe, Half-Masted Improv group, 501st Central Garrison and Mandalorian Mercs, Cedar Rapids Ultimate Super Heroes, Friendly Meeple, Waterloo Black Hawks, 93.5 The Limited Edition, The Core, Video Games, etc and many more. Through these partnerships we are providing exposure, connections, and opportunities to build a bridge between campus and our local community. This is also a great opportunity for the general public to learn more about these partners in their communities.