

Coastal Living

JENNIFER ALLEN, EDITOR

GEEKS, UNITE

Crystal Coast Con to channel the force Saturday

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Do you have a crush on Capt. Jean Luc Picard? Have you laid eyes on Bigfoot or been visited by ghosts? Do you work games of "Magic: The Gathering" into your weekend? Are your thumb muscles the most developed part of your upper body?

If you've answered "yes" to any of the above, or if you just like having fun for fun's sake, make plans to be at the Crystal Coast Con Saturday at MacDaddy's in Cape Carteret.

Crystal Coast Con is the county's first science fiction and gaming convention. It's a place for "Star Wars" fanatics and paranormal researchers, "Tekken" players and graphic novel connoisseurs. Basically, if you might be a geek, you should check it out.

The convention will feature speakers Rick Ankney of Tempest Comics and Games, and Dustin Pari, formerly of "Ghost Hunters International"; "Magic: The Gathering," "Tekken" and "Halo" tournaments; and a costume contest and more.

It gets started at 10 a.m. and lasts through early evening, with an extra "surprise" event — a real paranormal investigation — taking place at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$12 at the door, and separate tickets will be sold for the evening event. Geeks can find more information can be found at www.crystalcoastcon.com.

After referring to a huge group of people as "geeks," some explanation is in order.

"Geek" is no longer the four-letter word that it once was. Just look around: today we have Best Buy's Geek Squad, ThinkGeek.com, where intelligently designed knick-knacks are sold and Geek Chic, a style of dress widely adapted by the hipster movement.

In other words, geeks are cool and Crystal Coast Con wants to give them a place to be themselves.

The brains behind the convention are MacDaddy's owner Mac Holz and general manager and convention director Connie Nolter.

"It started as a small idea that we were working with internally," Ms. Nolter said. "But as we started to get more creative, we realized this could be a good event for the area."

The two started to get good feedback from friends and MacDaddy's staff, and began to plan.

"We created the website and started talking to vendors and started getting a lot of interest. Even out-of-state vendors were contacting us," Ms. Nolter said.

At the time of her interview Thursday, Ms. Nolter said she was still processing vendor requests.

The new convention's immediate popularity shouldn't be a surprise. Science fiction, gaming and other "geek" conventions, or cons as they're more often called, are not

a new idea.

San Diego Comic-Con International, a celebration of comics, science fiction media, film and television, has been held annually since 1970. In 2010 the con drew more than 130,000 visitors, many of them decked out in over-the-top costumes ranging from Ghostbusters to Klingons.

Dozens of other cons take place across the country each year, but as Ms. Nolter said, this will be the first in the county.

And it's generating interest among fans of science fiction, gaming, paranormal research and cryptozoology (the study of mythical creatures).

"People told me that they're really excited that this is coming to the area," Ms. Nolter said. "Some are coming just for gaming, some for cosplay, some for lectures."

Ms. Nolter considers herself a bit of a geek, too, although she says people are usually surprised to find that out.

"I'm really excited about three things. One of them is Greyson Wolf (a special effects make up artist,) we have a giant, 8-foot chrome robot coming and 'Ghost Hunters International.'"

As kitchen supervisor of MacDaddy's, Eric Fromholz of Hubert was one of the first to hear about the con, which he's excited about being a part of.

"I grew up on 'Star Trek' and 'Star Wars,'" he said. "I got into 'Magic' (The Gathering, a card game) for awhile. I've collected figures — Lego and 'Star Wars' stuff."

Mr. Fromholz has used his interest in "Star Wars" and "Star Trek" to create a special sci-fi menu for the convention. Items include Wookiee Barbecue Ribs, Ewok Nuggets, Romlin Blood Dip, Romlin Ale and Klingon Blood Wine.

But television shows and movies aren't the only aspects of this convention. With speakers lined up to discuss ghosts, spirits, fairies, Bigfoot and aliens, the study of the unknown will play a major role.

And Mr. Fromholz has an interest in such things, but he rejects the "geek" title.

"I don't think I'm a nerd or a geek, but I believe that we're not the only ones who live in the world. There might be other cultures outside of our galaxy that we don't know."

So it's not a surprise that he's an "X Files" fan, as well.

Clifton Creech of Beaufort is planning to attend the con for its focus on gaming.

"I'm a big fighting game geek," he said, "and anything that has a good storyline."

Mr. Creech said he's been into gaming since he was a kid.

"When I was 8 or 9, at Christmas me and my cousin would ask for each gaming system. So I'd have the Playstation and he'd have the Nintendo, and after we got tired of it we'd switch."

In high school, Mr. Creech remembers "Halo" tournaments with his friends. Even though a decade has passed since those get-togethers began, he and his friends still remember those hours of gaming.

"A bunch of my friends and I still talk to each other about legendary rounds we had when we were 13."

Mr. Creech plans to check out the "Halo" and "Tekken" tournaments at the convention.

"I feel like going to a con an putting your

skills to the test would be sweet," he said.

Mr. Creech said he recently picked up "Magic: The Gathering" with a couple of his roommates, but he's "definitely too much of a noob" to take part in that tournament.

Fans are just part of the fun though, a major part of the con are the vendors who will sell fantasy paintings, comic books, handcrafted wands and more.

A.J. Reimann of Richlands will be there representing his publishing company Reimann Books. Four of his authors, including his wife and 10-year-old daughter, have written science fiction books that Mr. Reimann will be selling at the con.

Despite the fantastical subject matter of some of the books he's published, and the fact that he was a "nerdy 'Star Wars' kid," this will be Mr. Reimann's first convention.

"We hope that this will be a good environment for the authors," he said.

Mr. Reimann's wife, who's pen name is K.L. Stewart, and daughter Victoria Leigh are planning to dress up for the costume contest. Both will be characters from their own fantasy books.

"They're all excited about dressing up," he said. "I'm just going to go with a 'Star Wars' tie."

One of his other authors, Lauren Jones who wrote a children's fantasy book, will be doing "fairy hair" at the convention.

Ms. Nolter said tickets are selling well, and she expects the event to sell out by Saturday. If this year goes well, Ms. Nolter and Mr. Holz would like to make the event an annual occurrence.

Mr. Creech said he would be interested in making a trip to the Crystal Coast Con each year, and many others would too.

"I feel like if they had it annually, the word would get around."

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- 8 a.m.: Doors open to artists and dealers
- 10 a.m.: Convention opens to public
- All day: Hollywood special effects artist Greyson Wolf, who designed fangs for season one of "True Blood," begins making custom fang creations
- 11 a.m.: Hourly door prizes begin, "Magic: The Gathering," "Halo" and "Tekken" tournament registration begins
- 11 a.m.: Soul Readings lecture by Andrea Hilf of Ghostcrossers
- 11:30 a.m.: Gaming tournaments begin noon: Panels begin noon: Personal readings by Andrew Hilf of Ghostcrossers
- 1 p.m.: Lecture by "Ghost Hunters International" Dustin Peri
- 2 p.m.: Cryptozoology lecture by South East Paranormal Investigators Association
- 2 p.m.: Costume contest registration begins for: best sci fi, best fantasy, best cosplay and best kids'
- 3 p.m.: History of the Comic Book with Rick Ankney of Tempest Comics and Games
- 4 p.m.: Lecture by "Ghost Hunters International" Dustin Peri
- 5 p.m.: Prelude to South East Paranormal Investigators Association demonstration



This 8-foot-tall, chrome "Comic Bot" will make an appearance at Crystal Coast Con Oct. 15 at MacDaddy's in Cape Carteret.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Con: Short for convention. Example: I'm planning to go to Comic-Con next summer, want to join me?

Cosplay: Short for costume play. The practice of dressing up as characters from books, games, films, comics and other media. Example: Her Wonder Woman cosplay was very true to character.

Cryptozoology: literally, "the study of hidden animals" or other mythical creatures. Example: My study of cryptozoology led me to Scotland where I studied the Loch Ness Monster.

Gamer: A person who is skilled at role-playing games, war games and video games. Example: I heard he was a hardcore gamer so I asked to join his World of Warcraft guild.

"Ghost Hunters International": A reality series on the SyFy chan-

nel following paranormal researchers who study haunted locations. Con guest Dustin Pari was an original cast member. Example: I made the mistake of turning on "Ghost Hunters International" just before bed, and now I'm too scared to sleep.

"Halo": A first-person shooter video game that was released in 2001. Subsequent versions have been released through 2010. Example: They waited in line at Best Buy for 36 hours to get a copy of Halo 3 on the release date.

"Magic: the Gathering": A role-playing card game played by two or more people. Example: He won the Magic: The Gathering game when he dealt 5 damage to her Hill Giant.

Noob: Also "newbie" or "newb." Someone who is new to something

and generally poor at it. Example: He was a total noob at Halo, he died six times in the first five minutes.

Paranormal Research: The study of ghosts, spirits, extraterrestrials, cryptids and parapsychology. Example: After being awoken by grey aliens in my bedroom, I asked a team of paranormal researchers to investigate.

Science Fiction: Also "sci fi." A genre of fiction dealing with imaginary, but plausible, content. Example: The alternative timeline in that science fiction story is making my head spin.

"Tekken": An arcade fighting game now available on a variety of gaming platforms. Example: It took awhile to get used to the Tekken controls, but now I've mastered it.

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Don't forget ...

The North Carolina State Fair begins Thursday and lasts through Oct. 23 at the N.C. State Fairgrounds in Raleigh. Visit www.ncstatefair.org for events schedule and more details.