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RodCon celebrates ten years of pop-culture and comics

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This past weekend on April 5th from 10 to 4 p.m., Rod Library opened their annual comic-book convention, Rod-Con. This convention aims to highlight numerous pop culture properties and fandoms by displaying local stores that specialize in superhero media, anime memorabilia, and even promote the works of up-and-coming artists, craftspeople and writers.

RodCon is free and accessible to the public, because the Rod Library employees believe in creating an environment that not only feels original and fresh every year, and allow the expression of identity and creativity to direct the flow of the convention. The UNI Sword-Fighting Club and Panther Tabletop Games were some of the few student organizations that appeared for student representation

and provided fetching activities to introduce newcomers to a terrific time. For its 10th anniversary, Rod Con grew significantly, and amassed 3,000 attendees from within the Cedar Falls Community.

Though the main level contained vendors that are geared more towards audiences 15 years old and up, there were also activities aimed towards those under that demographic on the 2nd floor. Youth activities were provided for those who felt more inclined to draw and craft, should they feel overwhelmed by the convention's packed nature.

Over at the Bandit Bags booth, two students, Leah Presnall and Madison Hay designed and ran a finger paint booth designed to create mini story books. The booth is conducted every year by art education professor, Wendy Miller. When asked about how it is able to

benefit student engagement on campus, Presnall states, "I feel that every student who wants to be an educator should take part in service learning projects like the one we did at Rod Con so that they can gain the valuable experience of working in their community."

Everyone has their own voice in how a story should be told. Stories have the potential to inspire and push those who feel powerless and unheard to make a mark on the world, whether it is through comics, movies, gaming, or even animation. Convention-goers had the opportunity to experience a stop-motion comic titled "Gethsemane." This 16-minute short film was produced by Sensill Studios, Iowa, and Nebraska's first black comic-book publisher that aims to bring authentic representation through the genre of sci-fi and fantasy amongst the Pan-African community.

Displayed by owner, Basi Affia, the passion displayed throughout the viewing of "Gethsemane" highlighted Rod Con's atmosphere for its acceptance of individuality and inclusivity for any around the University of Northern Iowa given Affia's welcoming and dedicated nature to exploring complex themes in his writing towards viewers.

With the size of Rod Con, there are bound to be vendors with equivalent sales practices and structures. None could predict that a creative group of artists, dubbed the Iowa Ghostbusters, would appear with a replicated "Ghostbusters" vehicle along with providing uniquely crafted replicas of the iconic 1984 proton packs and outfits reminiscent of the popular film franchise. Kind and engaging, the Iowa Ghostbusters allowed those attending to look at the memorabilia from the films

and even played the classic siren sound effect well known from the beloved supernatural comedy outside of the convention.

Lastly their annual costume contest had one of the biggest turnouts throughout this convention's history and was a staple of cosplay innovation and imagination that ranged from an array of different genres. From storm troopers and anime heroes, there was no shortage of fascination to be awed by the numerous participants. The 10th Rod Con event created a very pleasant time for those interested in diverse art, original intellectual properties, and exciting games, that is bound to bring many back for more in the future and attract those who have never attended a convention.