

Dungeons, dragons come alive on campus

BY VALERIE SPENCER
Staff Reporter

They're the only people on campus who encourage letting the roll of a polyhedral die determine the course of the future.

Role-playing games such as Dungeons and Dragons have become increasingly popular since their introduction in the 1970s. D&D merchandise makes up 53 percent of the role-playing games market, according to a 2006 article referencing a Comics and Games Retailers report. Altogether, 20 million people had played D&D in 2004 and collectively had spent more than \$1 billion on books and equipment, according to a BBC article.

Gaming culture is becoming progressively more appealing to students across campus, offering an escape from everyday life.

One such student is senior Eric Scott, who has been involved in role-playing games since high school. Scott describes D&D as being a lot like acting.

"You really throw yourself into a different kind of person than you normally would be," Scott said. "It's escapism. You get to think and act and play in a world that's very different from your own, which is just fun."

Although D&D's required use of at least three rulebooks can look complicated, Scott said it's not hard to learn.

"Basically it's a more sophisticated, book-heavy version of 'let's pretend,'" Scott said. "... So the characters have their character statistics which let them know how good they are at certain things, and then they use that and dice to figure out whether they succeed or fail at any given task."

Scott said that in addition to playing in two games a week, he also is the Dungeon Master for two other games.

"You're just the organizer and the person who ... says, 'I want to play this,' and thankfully we have such a big gamer community here at Truman that it's pretty easy to find those people who'll say, 'Oh, that sounds cool. Can I play with you?' and then you just run from there," Scott said.

Scott said a lot of work goes into planning and organizing an original game but that it's what happens during the game that's the most thrilling.

"It's kind of like you're setting up the outline for a novel but you have no idea what the main characters are going to do," Scott said. "... You make an

educated guess and you try to figure out where you can guide the players into going, but ultimately it's their call. A lot of it is preparing, a lot of it is realizing that your preparations become meaningless over the course of the game."

Harry Althoff, graduate student and teaching assistant, said he also spends a lot of time getting organized before a game of D&D.

"I tend to over-plan," he said. "I usually spend a couple months of staring into space to come up with stuff like this, ... and usually I spend two to three hours before each game session preparing for that night."

Althoff said he enjoys being a Dungeon Master because he gets the chance to walk other people through a world he has created.

"The way I plan out a game is I have moments or scenes in my mind that I think would be generally awesome and want to work towards," Althoff said. "I think there's a fair amount of, to put it nicely, pride involved and, not so nicely, egotism."

Sophomore Ruth Babb is newer to the gaming community. She said she heard about RPGs in high school but didn't have a chance to get involved until she came to Truman.

"I went to the activities fair and there was an RPG club, and I was like, 'An RPG club? That's amazing!'" Babb said. "So I went to the first meeting and almost got scared away because they're all very loud people there, and I was just a little scared freshman. But I went, talked to some people and joined in on a game, and I've just kept being there ever since."

Babb said she enjoys getting involved in games for more than just the sake of playing but for creating friendships through the game as well.

"You have to know where your character stands on a few things, and where they and where other characters stand makes for some really interesting, really involved discussions about right and wrong and how things should and should not be done," Babb said. "... Conversations like that always bring you closer to people."

Babb said that coming from a small town, she was surprised to realize how many people actually were interested in RPGs.

"Here there are so many extremely creative people, so many really good role-players and really good DMs," Babb said. "I was completely blown away by the size, the enthusiasm ... and just the wel-



Senior Eric Scott (far right) relaxes with his comrades in West Campus Suites last week playing his favorite game of Dungeons and Dragons. D&D merchandise makes up 53 percent of the role-playing games market.

coming. ... It really did help me through my freshman year because I made a lot of really good friends right off the bat."

In addition to being a fun pastime, Babb said she feels games like D&D are helping her prepare for her future career.

"I want to be a writer someday, so it helps me look at people and see how they interact and see why they do the things they do sometimes," Babb said. "And also, I love the idea of creating a story and seeing what comes next. That's very much a part of why I love this game because interacting with a story like that is something you do when you read but you don't actually get to have a character of your own."

In D&D, a Dungeon Master proposes an idea for an adventure he wants to take the other characters through, and all who get involved create their own character to participate in the fictional world.

Babb said that even though everything that happens to her character during a game is make-believe, she still feels emotions about what is occurring. "You've created this character,"

she said. "You can be proud of what they do, you can be sad when something happens to them because you've put a lot of time and effort into this person, even if they don't exist."

Babb said she finds the fictional world created in a D&D game to be exciting and takes true pleasure in playing.

"There is something to be said for journeying out and smashing down a dragon," she said. "There is something cool about saying, 'Yeah, you know that dragon that was terrorizing your town? We killed it!'"

However, Babb said she has run into people who think D&D is a sort of cult game tantamount to Satanism.

"We're actually kind of amused by that," Babb said. "There's this guy on the Internet who has a site where he puts out super-Christian comics, and there's one called 'Dark Dungeons' that goes into how playing Dungeons and Dragons drags somebody's soul to Satan. And we kind of send it around like, 'This is hilarious, you must read this.'"

Scott said he thinks there are some negative connotations connected to

playing RPGs but that they have dramatically decreased in the past decade.

"There's some stigma to it, and I don't think it's ever going to go away," Scott said. "I'm really not convinced, especially since it's been 30 years since the first D&D game came out, that there's ever going to be a time when families across America will walk into Wal-Mart to pick up the D&D box set and walk out to spend a rousing night around the table. It's probably not going to happen. ... [But] most of the really bad stereotypes have gone away."

Scott said most gamers have embraced their inherent geekiness by now and that doing so is becoming steadily more acceptable.

"I mean let's face it, the highest-grossing movies of the past decade are probably the Matrix films, Lord of the Rings films and Harry Potter films, all of which are steeped in geek," Scott said. "I've heard it said that geek culture has become pop culture. So I think that for the most part the geek has inherited the earth. We're OK now."

Possibilities for pet adoption thrive in area

BY JENIFER CALANDRA
Staff Reporter

Erica Gardner's support of puppy mills starts and stops with her love for the animals in them.

"Missouri has a very bad reputation for being the puppy mill state," said Gardner, co-founder of Field of Dreams Rescue.

In puppy mills, wire cages are lined up along the walls, filled with dogs used for breeding and puppies meant to be sold to pet shops, she said.

"They are in substandard situations," Gardner said. "They are not treated like family pets."

Gardner said the unsold dogs are auctioned like livestock.

For this reason, she had the idea of starting Field of Dreams Rescue, a dog rescue organization located in Worthington, Mo., to "aid in the prevention of animal cruelty by offering a sanctuary for all unwanted dogs, including but not limited to dogs from abusive or neglect situations and commercial kennels," according to the mission statement at www.fieldofdreamsrescue.org.

Gardner, who raises and breeds Borzoi and Australian Shepherd, said she thinks breeders should raise for quality dogs rather than quantity. She and her fiancé Scott Wood only raise one litter of puppies each year. She said she does

not agree with commercial breeding strictly for profit.

"These breeders are producing puppies simply to sell them [to brokers rather than private individuals]," Gardner said.

Field of Dreams Rescue is a no-kill organization run strictly by volunteers who care for and socialize with the rescued dogs.

Gardner said the only time the organization will euthanize dogs is if they have extreme medical conditions or are overly aggressive. The organization only has euthanized one animal, through a veterinarian, since its creation last December.

Field of Dreams Rescue also cares for stray dogs and dogs affected by conditions in which their owners no longer can keep them. Many times the rescued dogs already are in their adulthood.

"It's very hard to place an adult dog," she said. "They're very good dogs."

Many rescue groups are strict about adoption families. Although Field of Dreams Rescue does have regulations, adoption through the organization is less complicated than through many other groups, Gardner said.

One of the 15 Field of Dreams Rescue volunteers will talk to prospective families about what kind of dog would be good for their situation based on the number of children, amount of space in the home and time available to spend with the pet in an effort to educate them about the animals, Gardner said. Once the organization is sure the pet and family are compatible, the adoption process takes place.

"You've heard of Match.com," she said. "We do that with the dogs."

Adoption fees are based on covering costs but generally are about \$125 for adult dogs and \$125 for puppies with a \$50 refund after proof of spay or neuter is provided, Gardner said.

"I have reduced the adoption fees many times to put [the dogs] in a good home," Gardner said.

The organization makes about \$10 per dog, which goes to fund the care of unadopted dogs, she said.

The unadopted dogs are housed with a foster family who care for and socialize with the animals. Field of Dreams Rescue provides foster families with supplies to

care for the dog, including food.

"[Foster families] don't have to do anything but TLC," Gardner said.

It is possible for college students to adopt a pet through Field of Dreams Rescue, but Gardner said it depends on the students' living conditions and schedule. A college student's life generally is unpredictable and can be disruptive to the animal, she said.

"[Owning a pet] is a lifelong commitment," she said. "We're looking for a permanent, final home."

Gardner said she asks students to consider being a foster parent for the organization instead.

In addition to rescuing dogs, Field of Dreams Rescue provides an adoption assistance program for owners who can no longer keep their family pets. Gardner said she posts pictures and contact information on the Field of Dreams Web site for free. Prospective families call the current owner directly, and the owner gets to choose the new owners, Gardner said.

However, pets in the adoption assistance program cannot be sold for money, Gardner said.

Another local option for pet adoption is the Adair County Humane Shelter on Highway 6 in Kirksville.

According to Pet Finder.com's

page for the Adair County Humane Shelter, all animals over the age of six months at the shelter are spayed or neutered before adoption. Animals younger than six months old require an additional \$40 deposit until the organization receives proof of spay or neuter.

Purebred dogs adopted from the shelter cost about \$95 or more, the Web site said. Mixed-breed adult dogs require a \$60 adoption fee, and adult cats require a \$50 adoption fee. Puppies are \$15 each with a \$40 spay/neuter deposit, and kittens are \$10 each with the same spay/neuter deposit.

The Adair County Humane Shelter now has a pre-application process for many animals at the shelter, the Web site said. The process requires a 48-hour wait for reference checks.

Truman alumna Lauren Jackson said she didn't have to undergo reference checks when she adopted her cat Sammy from the Humane Shelter last June.

Jackson said she always has loved animals and had a cat growing up, but she decided to adopt Sammy on impulse.

"Spur-of-the-moment wasn't the best thing, but by no means do I regret getting the cat," she said.

The adoption process was very simple. Jackson said she looked at the cats available for

adoption, picked one, signed papers agreeing to take care of the cat and paid the adoption fee. Jackson said that because she adopted a kitten, she received a voucher to have the cat spayed once it was old enough.

She said she thinks pets in off-campus housing are popular for companionship and fit with most students' schedules.

"Especially since you only have classes for the most part ... you still have time to take care of [the pet]," Jackson said.

Sophomore Britney Snodgrass volunteers at the Adair County Humane Shelter every week through Tau Lambda Sigma. She said the volunteers usually play with the puppies and kittens and take the adult dogs on walks around the facilities. Snodgrass said she often sees the same adult dogs at the shelter.

"The puppies usually go pretty fast, but the older dogs are there from week to week," she said.

About 6 to 8 million cats and dogs are in shelters each year, and 3 to 4 million of those animals are euthanized, according to the Humane Society of the United States' Web site (www.hsus.org). About 16 percent of the 73 million currently owned dogs in the United States were adopted from a shelter, according to the Web site.

wake up right. wake up right. wake up right. wake up right.
 wake up right. wake up right. wake up right. wake up right.
 right. wake up right. wake up right. wake up right. wake
 up right. wake up right. wake up right. wake up right.
 wake up right. wake up right. wake up right. wake up right.
 wake up right. wake up right. wake up right. wake up
 right. wake up right. wake up right. wake up right. wake
 up right. wake up right. wake up right. wake up right. wake
 up right. wake up right. wake up right. wake up right.
 wake up right. wake up right. wake up right. wake up right.
 wake up right. wake up right. wake up right. wake up
 right. wake up right. wake up right. wake up right. wake
 up right. wake up right. wake up right. wake up right. wake
 up right. wake up right. wake up right. wake up right.
 wake up right. wake up right. wake up right. wake up right

WITH THE INDEX
EVERY THURSDAY MORNING

ASE
 CERTIFIED

Sony's
 Collision Center

Quality work for 30 years

- Insurance estimates
- Cheerfully furnished
- One-stop repairing
- All domestic and imports
- Frame straightening
- Modern paint & body repair

660-665-8533

515 N. Marion
 Mon to Fri 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Nobody notices our work, and that's the way it should be.