

Geeks, Clackamas invade

Welcome
To
PDXLAN
Caution: Fraging Ahead

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A&E Editor

Twice a year, 500 self-proclaimed geeks gather at Columbia Boulevard's Holiday Inn Conference Center in Portland for four straight days of computer-gaming.

The event, called PDXLAN, is what is known as a LAN (Local Area Network) party. What this entails is a bunch of people hooking their computers together so that they can play games with and/or against each other.

I had the opportunity to attend PDXLAN in February and witness geeks of all ages "frag" each other on *Battlefield 2* and show off their modified computer cases.

Normally when major LAN events like this occur, they're mostly for competitive gaming, i.e. tournaments. PDXLAN does have tournaments, but its main focus, according to PDXLAN founder Matt Conwell (who also runs the PDXLAN events across the country), is to create a fun-loving social atmosphere that offers up more than just gaming.

"[PDXLAN] was an MBA project at George Fox University," Conwell said. "The teacher said, 'I want you to make a business that has never been created before.'"

Some of the events that take place at PDXLAN include

Dodgeball, Poker, popsicle bridge tournaments (contestants try to make the largest one) and a computer case modification contest.

While wandering around the Conference Center, I ran into a couple of Clackamas Community College students gaming with their friends. Justin Parcher, 19, and 18-year-old Scott Poole have been attending PDXLAN regularly.

"It's a whole lot of fun to just come and hang with a bunch of friends," said Parcher, who's currently working on his Transfer Degree at Clackamas.

Business major Poole said that PDXLAN is "a time where I can get away from school."

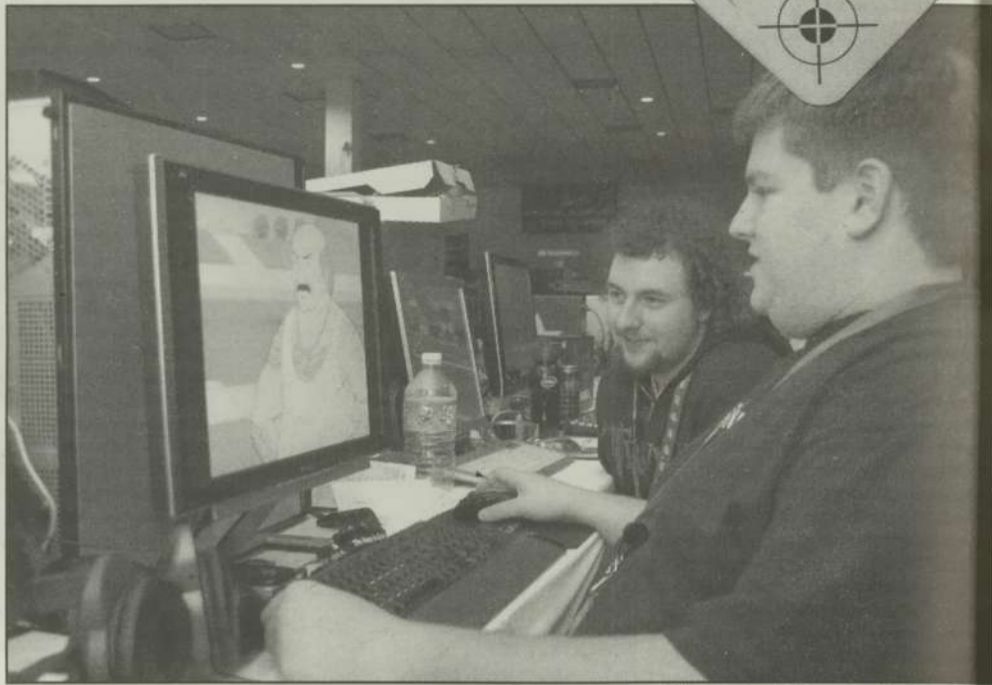
Poole and Parcher consider themselves "casual" gamers, meaning they don't play video games all the time; they actually have a life.

"This is the first time I've gamed in three weeks," Poole said.

Since they've been coming to PDXLAN, they've noticed quite a few changes in the PC gaming scene.

"[Games] at these events are a lot more diversified now," Parcher said. "Gamers aren't just playing the new games; they're playing older ones, too. It's not just first-person shooters anymore."

Parcher and Poole have been attending LAN parties for quite a while. In fact, when they went to Clackamas High School, they created their own LAN group called



All photos by Jeff Sorensen Clackamas Print

Clackamas Community College students Justin Parcher (front) and Scott Poole (back) enjoy an episode of *Aqua Teen Hunger Force* in between game sessions at PDXLAN in the Holiday Inn's Conference Center.

LANCLACK.

"We're trying to eventually revive LANCLACK at CCC," Parcher said.

They said that there's a big gaming scene at Clackamas, so

creating a LAN group would definitely work on campus.

"About a quarter of my class games," Poole said. "[Clackamas] has a good population that doesn't discriminate [against gamers]."

The next PDXLAN event will take place in late August of this year. There are still plenty of seats available, and reservations are only \$60. To register, visit www.pdxlan.com.



A staff member tosses schwag to a crowd of about 500 gamers. There were many prize give-aways that took place throughout the entire LAN event, most of which were supplied by sponsors.



Joe Szupiany relaxes by his newly finished, pirate treasure-chest-shaped computer case, which he designed himself.



PDXLAN founder Matt Conwell, and his wife, give a gamer a gift card to an online store as he turns in his winning raffle ticket.

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