

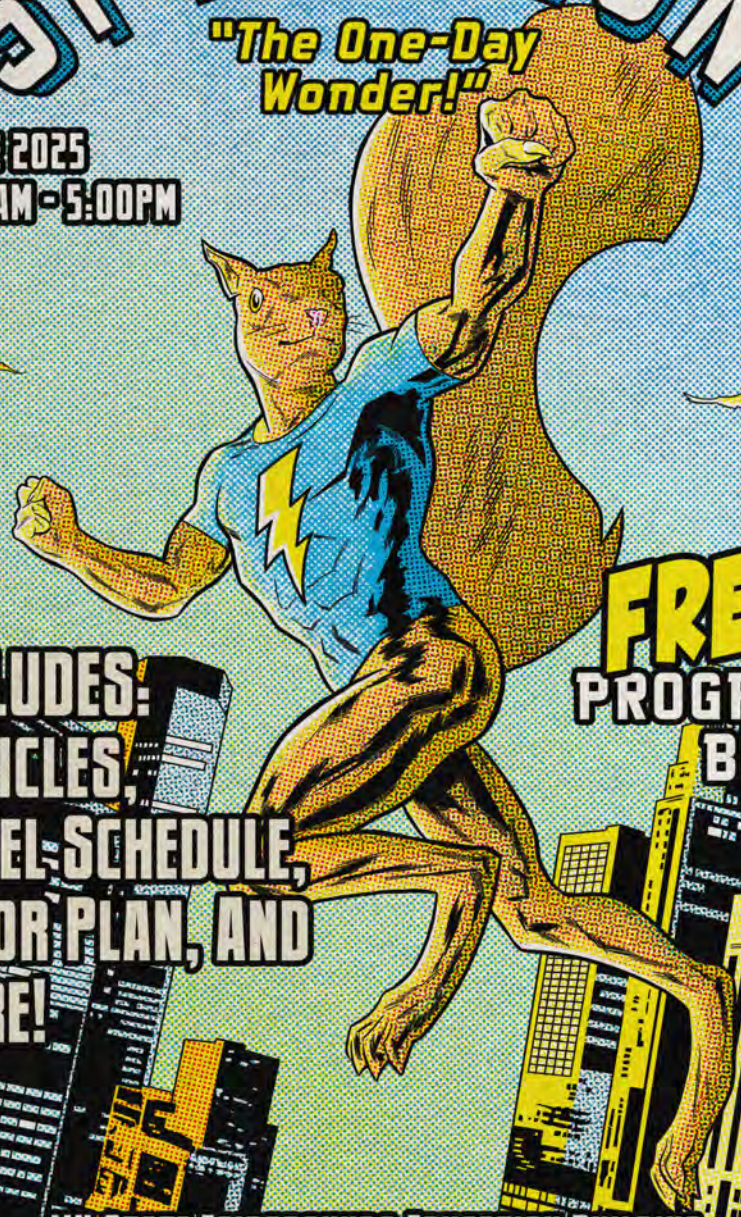
MN CBA

2025

SPRINGCON

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MNCBA SpringCon 2025, presented by the Minnesota Comic Book Association.



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Welcome to MNCBA SpringCon 2025: From Geek to Volunteer

by Matt Walkosz, MNCBA Volunteer Coordinator

"Sometimes I lie awake at night, and ask, 'Where have I gone wrong?' Then a voice says to me, 'This is going to take more than one night.'"
– Charles Schulz, *Peanuts*, July 15, 1994

Welcome to MNCBA SpringCon 2025. Last fall, we made our triumphant return to the Grandstand, and now we bring the "one day wonder" back to the Education Building.

My first comic convention was the MCBA Spring MicroCon back in 2008. At that point, I was your stereotypical awkward quiet geek; just two years out of college and not much money to spend. For hours, I wandered about the floor. I dug through the cheap bins and didn't really strike up conversations with anyone.

Honestly though, I must have had a wonderful time, because I was back for the next show in the fall. Then every year afterwards.

Over the next decade, as I spent time waiting in lines or milling about the long boxes, I started talking to people. I found other collectors who shared my love of comics; who wanted to discuss comic history or share a friendly competition to see who got the better deals. Vendors, artists, and volunteers started to know me as a regular.

I felt like I was a small part of a large local community.

In late 2022, the announcement came that SpringCon and FallCon were ending. I was devastated. Where else would I find so many treasures or regularly see all my fellow comic nerds? Then a couple of months later, I received a surprise call from Steve, a past volunteer who I had gotten to know. The MNCBA was reforming and there was an opportunity for me to lend some expertise with the marketing efforts.

At my first planning meeting, I was unsure how much help I could be. The group of seasoned volunteers welcomed me, listened to what I had to say, and made me feel like part of the team. Several months passed with long dull meetings setting the foundations for the new organization.

MNCBA SpringCon 2023 was my first experience behind the scenes of a convention. There was no training. No way for me to truly prepare for the madness. Setup was a mess of flinging tables and trying to find tape

measures so we could mark every spot. During the show, I was told to wander the floor checking on guests. Many things went right that weekend, and some things didn't. I started keeping notes of what I could improve for next time.

After MNCBA FallCon 2023, there was a change in leadership. Long-time volunteers left; some came back, then left all over again. Amidst the revolving changes, the role of Volunteer Coordinator became vacant. There was a suggestion that I take over the role, but I was hesitant. Instead, I helped to partially fill in; fielding emails from potential volunteers and getting schedules set.

Many will remember MNCBA SpringCon 2024 for the weird turf field or the parking situation. What I remember most is the number of volunteers, vendors, and guests who turned to me like I hadn't only been doing this for a year. They needed guidance, and I appeared to be someone available with answers.

In a year, we had grown from an auditorium back to a giant floor. However, our volunteer numbers hadn't grown to match the bigger venue. I spent much of the show filling in as needed, running around the field to check on everything and everyone. Once the show ended, my job wasn't done. I stayed well past dark with a group of volunteers tearing down tables and dragging them across the turf to store.

The next day, as I laid down recovering, my mind raced with notes and ideas of what we could do better. The next weekend, I finally agreed to become the MNCBA Volunteer Coordinator so I could be a bridge between leadership and volunteers.

MNCBA FallCon 2024 was my first two-day show. Being back in the familiar environment of the Grandstand created a lot of excitement. Let me say that if you've never seen the Grandstand completely empty – no booths or tables, only a few people – it is an eerie sight. Our slowly expanding group of volunteers worked hard to make that show run as well as it did. More lessons were learned, and notes taken, to improve the experience. After four shows, we showed the MNCBA was back to stay.

As I write this introduction, we are a few weeks away from MNCBA SpringCon 2025. The last week before will be a scramble for me between new volunteer training, printing thousands of flyers, and even producing this program book in your hands. There will be days full of set up followed by seven hours of managed chaos.

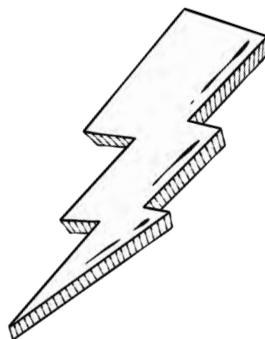
I hope all the hard work of our volunteers creates a wonderful experience, and everyone here enjoys the show.

PANEL ROOM SCHEDULE

11:00AM TO 11:45AM	"Behind the Panels" with Jen Bateman MNCBA President Jen Bateman discusses the process of (re)building the new Minnesota Comic Book Association, how it differs from its previous incarnations, and its long-term goals as a non-profit. Jen will also talk about the challenges of leadership in a historically male-dominated space, as well as their uncommon experience of being both a comic book creator and showrunner.
12:00PM TO 12:45PM	"Let's Go Ape" with Bill Hedrick Multiple Award-winning Master Costumer Bill Hedrick will use his handmade prosthetics to transform his model into a Planet of the Apes Chimpanzee. Bill will be showing techniques and tips learned from 30+ years of prosthetic makeup, with audience questions encouraged.
1:00PM TO 1:45PM	"Comics 101: Words & Pictures" with Paul Fricke Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD) Professor Paul Fricke hosts a drop-in comic class! Paul will stress the unique qualities of the comics medium, storytelling, and reading words 'n' pictures. Beginners and students at all levels are encouraged to come and join in the fun!
2:00PM TO 2:45PM	Cosplay Contest The MNCBA is excited to announce our new cosplay contest hosted by Nick Kaufman, formerly of Crypticon. The SpringCon categories are Youth (12 and Under), Novice, Advanced, and Group. Read the rules on our Cosplay Contest web page, and then sign up at the Nomad Ghostbusters table by 1:30PM!
3:00PM TO 3:45PM	LIVE Charity Auction The fan-favourite MNCBA live charity auction! Participate in our live auction to bid on original, one-of-a-kind artwork, sketch cards, and collectibles! Auction proceeds benefit the MNCBA and the Hero Initiative.

The MNCBA would like to thank the following for their help:

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- *All the Vendors
- *All the Creators
- *All our Attendees
- *All the People we forgot!



*And of course all the volunteers, without whom this won't be possible.

Volunteer with us!

The Minnesota Comic Book Association (MNCBA) is a Federally-recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation staffed and run entirely by volunteers.

We are always excited to have friendly and enthusiastic volunteers join our team!

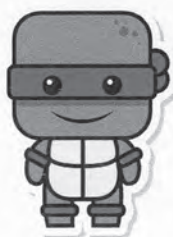
Whether your passion is for comic books, the community, or being a part of something bigger, the Minnesota Comic Book Association (MNCBA) may be the place for you!

Learn more at:
<https://www.mncba.org/volunteer-info.html>



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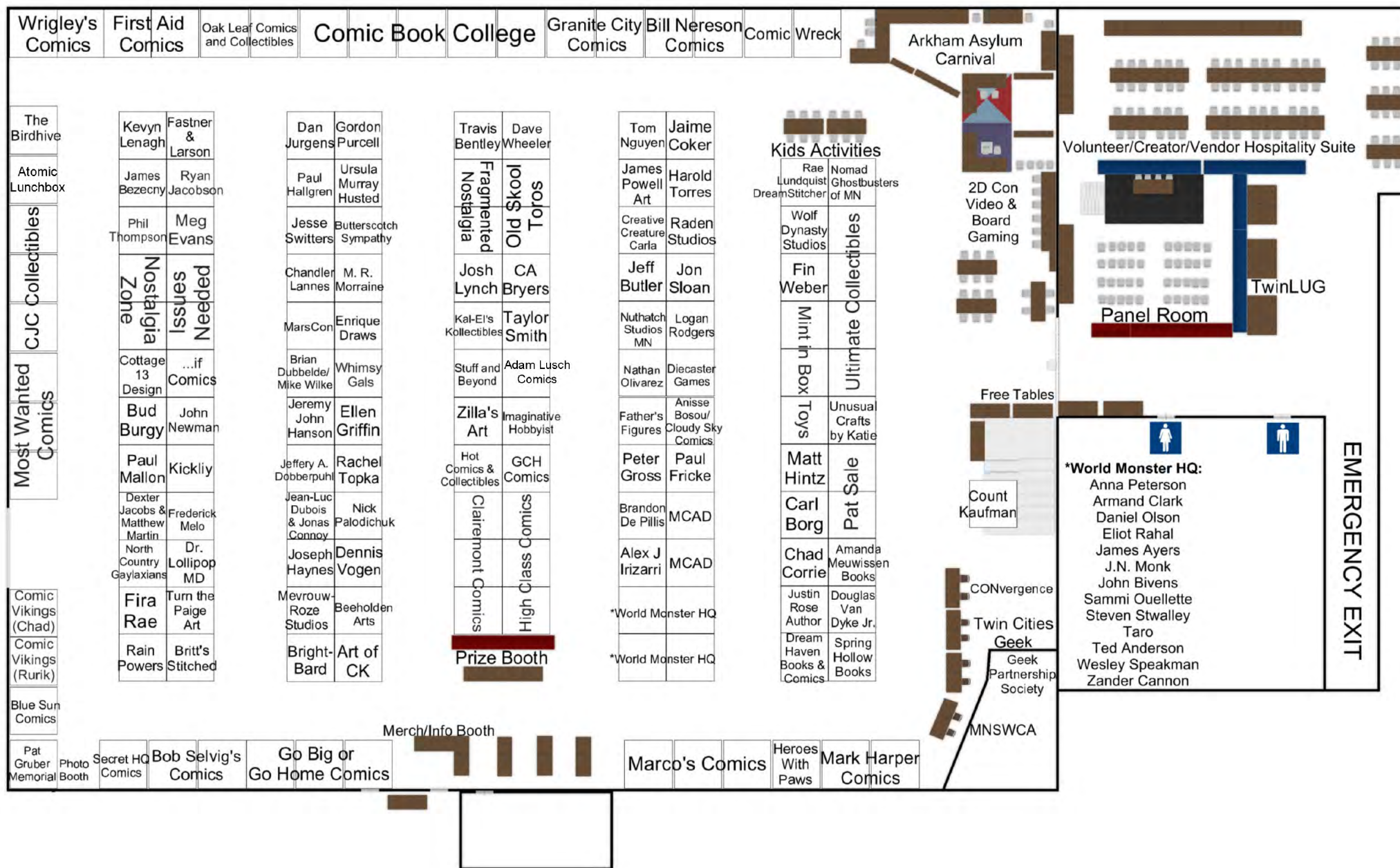
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Our Friend, Pat Gruber

by Stephen Henninger

Our friend.

I thought a lot about how, and what, to write here about Pat Gruber. I considered the title “My Friend,” but that would not be fair to Pat or his many, many friends here. So, I decided to change it to a more truthful title, because Pat really was a friend to everyone at the Con.

I can’t tell the story from everyone’s perspective. I can only tell it from mine. Hopefully, it will give you some insight into what kind of a man and a friend Pat was, and how big of a hole his absence has left behind.

We met in High School, even though he went to St. Bernard’s and I went to Hill-Murray. Pat and I couldn’t have been more different. He liked Def Leppard, and I liked Judas Priest. But he was funny, always happy, and boy – could he drink beer!

We didn’t see much of each other after High School because we got jobs and life just got in the way. I collected comics and worked at a hotel. Across the street from St. Paul Comics, the first Con Pat ever did was put on by the owner of St. Paul Comics. I helped Pat set up there. He told me afterward that it was his first Con. But, again, life got in the way. I changed jobs and moved. I didn’t see much of Pat for a few years.

I got married and was soon divorced. One of the first people to come to check on me and see how I was doing was Pat. This was the first time Pat was there for me, and it certainly wouldn’t be the last time. That was Pat in a nutshell – always there for a friend.

Soon after, I moved in with him. We were roommates for five years. During that time, I had many ups and downs, and Pat was there for me – especially in the down times. I had a bad breakup; Pat was there. I lost a job; Pat was there. I got arrested; Pat was there. I needed a car; Pat was there to help me financially.

Don’t get me wrong, though – there were plenty of ups, too. Playing poker was one of those. He was honestly a great player. He was fearless.

Pat's true love was comics, though he was truly in his element selling comics. He loved every aspect of the Con and is the reason I am doing what I do now. He was one of the few people that have been with the MNCBA since the late 1980's. He was proud of giving back to the community. The food drive meant a lot to him.

If you didn't ever get a chance to meet Pat, I am sorry. You missed out. If you want to hear a story about him – just ask the guy behind the long boxes you are digging through, or the guy digging next to you. Chances are they both have a great Pat story.

One of my favorite Pat stories is when we went to Crypticon about ten years ago when they had Michael Biehn and Lance Henriksen. We went because they were in Pat's favorite movie, *Aliens*. We were able to spend the whole night talking with Michael Biehn.

It was great; Biehn had a million stories about all the many movies he was in, and the characters he played. It is one of the fondest memories I have with Pat. Additionally, it was at the Ramada Bloomington, which was the old Thunderbird Hotel – the hotel the Con used to be at before it moved to the MN State Fairgrounds.

Pat was a generous man. He always lit the room he was in with his smile and personality. We didn't always agree, but we never fought.

I know this isn't doing him justice. He deserves better than what I can put into words. I am writing this with tears in my eyes. He left us way too soon.

I was so proud when Pat told not only me, but others, that my team and I were doing such a great job on bringing the MNCBA back. I have had a lot of people tell me that, but it meant the most coming from him. I will never be the same now that Pat is gone. I think about him every day... it's a pain that won't go away.



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Tell us Sparky sent you

The MNCBA welcomes Nick Kaufman to the team as our Cosplay Coordinator!

A few words from Nick:

In the early years of SpringCon and FallCon, while I was working with Dead Dog Comics, I had always loved the spirit of the costuming and the developing superhero community.



During my first fifteen years developing Crypticon, I wanted to bring that element to my show – with a darker edge, though. We had many competitions and started with a costume contest that eventually evolved into a cosplay contest.



We also had a makeup special effects contest, and for a couple of years, a prop-building contest. I spent many years studying and practicing makeup special effects and latex mask making techniques from movies, as well as prop-building. I was one of the regular judges for all these contests.

Our cosplay contest grew to be a very competitive and entertaining event.

I want to bring my passion for the art of cosplay to the MNCBA contest, and have it grow to be not only fun but a highly competitive event. I can see limitless potential. I intend to start this off with the kind of fun and energy that will engage people, inspiring them to start making costumes and entering the contest themselves in the future.



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