

Star Worlds entered on historic registry

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DeKALB – Customers at Star Worlds Arcade have been fighting in the boxing ring, saving the universe from space aliens and navigating mazes while avoiding pesky ghosts since 1985 – an arcade run almost unheard of in today’s video game industry.

Byron Czopek and Andrew McLaughlin, Northern Illinois University graduate students in communication studies, set out recently to tell the story of the arcade in their student documentary, “Star Worlds: A Pocket Full of Tokens and I’m Heading to the Arcade.”

Czopek and McLaughlin spent hours at the arcade interviewing the staff and learning the history of the business, from its start in Maple Park to its present location at 1234 E. Lincoln Highway in DeKalb. They traveled to Ottumwa, Iowa, to visit The Video Game Hall of Fame & Museum and interview video game world record holders acquainted with Star Worlds.

The arcade’s owner, Patrick O’Malley, said it all started when he had too many games to fit in his parents’ Maple Park garage.

“My parents wanted the games and all my friends out of their house,” he said.

The students describe the video as “a film about the community, the arcade, the retro rediscovery, the kill screens, the quarters on the marquee and the hope for the future in the preservation of an inherent part of the 1980s, which is classic gaming.”

Following the May 7 screening, there was an after-party at the arcade to celebrate the documentary and its creators.

Among the guests were Elizabeth Bolinger, president of The Video Game Hall of Fame & Museum, and Walter Day, founder of the international video game high score organization Twin Galaxies.

Day announced the induction of Star Worlds Arcade into The International Registry of Historic Video Game Arcades, an honor bestowed upon what Twin Galaxies describes as “pioneers who have kept the legacy of the neighborhood arcade alive in a time when the very existence of the traditional neighborhood arcade is threatened.”

Since the registry’s inception in 1998, only four other arcades have received this recognition.