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D&D: Creating camaraderie for 40 years

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Coming out of the dungeon

By: Patrick Kertz

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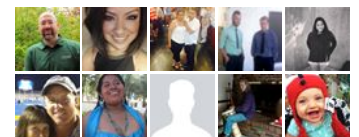
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Humboldt State psychology major Jarad Lam-Dyer has been playing Dungeons & Dragons since he was 7 years old.

"The game is not complex, it's little small things that are stacked together," Lam-Dyer said. "[It] becomes really easy to learn when you start playing and ultimately works best when it can unfold with the unison of the dungeon master and the players."

Since its creation in 1974, Dungeons & Dragons has provided players with imaginative, fantastic adventures. Lam-Dyer described Dungeons & Dragons as a social tool where players can have a crazy amount of fun and shenanigans with their friends. Lam-Dyer, who was introduced to the game by his father, says that socialization is essential in playing the game.

"You're using your imagination and you're engaging with other people too. That's why the social aspect is there," Lam-Dyer said.

Kyle Fry, a student at HSU encourages people to give Dungeons & Dragons a try as a way to have fun and be social.

"You get to go goof around with your buddies for a couple of hours and have random adventures where you have no real limit to what you can do," Fry said. "You can be anything that you've wanted while having fun with a bunch of people around you."

Starting a game is easy. Mario Hernandez is a relatively new player. He said joining a campaign — the term used to describe the game's imaginative scenarios — does not take much.

"Joining a campaign costs nothing to start except time," Hernandez said.

In the game, players take on the role of characters and are led through an adventure by the dungeon master, who controls the non-player characters and the monsters. The dungeon master is responsible for setting up the game's events, storyline, and plotlines, while moderating the pace of the adventure.

Lam-Dyer generally plays as the dungeon master and uses PDF files found on the Internet to set up a variety of campaigns in which the players improvise their adventures.

Aubrie Adams is a teaching assistant at University California, Santa Barbara who has researched and written an analysis on Dungeons & Dragons. She said that the game has been negatively portrayed in the media due to Christian groups objecting to ideas such as magic because it opposes their ideology.

"Oftentimes when people are unfamiliar with [Dungeons & Dragons], or what it's like to play the game, they tend to draw upon stereotypes," Adams said. "The players today are making a lot of strides in promoting the game and getting people to understand that it's not a negative thing and it's a positive experience that is actually good for people to play."

Dungeons & Dragons players have also struggled with the stereotypes associated with playing the game. Players have often been labeled as anti-social and considered societal outcasts. Adams stated that these stereotypes are generally far from the truth

"Dungeons & Dragons is inherently more social than other types of games because a part of the dynamics of playing the game is that you are in a small group of people and you have to socially construct or build your world together with these other players," Adams said. "So in that way it has much more potential than other types of games to create a social dynamic."

With the popularity of digital games such as World of Warcraft, that feature elements of Dungeons & Dragons, role playing games may become even more popular in the future. Adams said the movement may continue to grow.

"Role playing games are on the rise, especially in terms of moving beyond the tabletop version but going into digital realms and contributing to more massively multiplayer online games coming out," Adams said. "The whole genre of role playing and socializing through imaginative activity is definitely on the rise and I think we're going to see that trend for a long time."

At HSU, players can organize Dungeon & Dragons games through the Fantasy Gamers Guild, a school club that organizes student gaming activities. It organizes on-campus meets for Dungeons & Dragons, Magic the Gathering, Settlers of Catan, and a number of other games. The club meets on Fridays at 6 p.m. in Founder's Hall 204.

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