

‘An Established Feeling’

Michigan VFW Post’s Gaming Event Expands

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For the third year in a row, a Michigan VFW Post has meshed the veteran and gaming communities in a fundraising event.

Hunter Desander, commander of VFW Post 4113 in St. Johns, Mich., organized Combo Con, an event that included VFW Post 3055 (St. Louis, Mich.), VFW Post 1454 (Elma, Mich.) and VFW Post 3733 (Fowler, Mich.). The three-day event features video game competitions, cosplay (dressing up as characters from popular culture) and special guests from the fighter-game community.

Combo Con continues to grow and drew more than 450 people this year, according to Desander. Splitting up the funds raised, each Post will receive about \$200 from the three days of festivities.

“It’s just people of all creeds, different backgrounds, different races coming together just for one joint cause,” said Desander, who served in Afghanistan in 2013 with the 2nd Bn., 506th Inf., 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Abn. Div., as an infantryman.

Held at the St. Louis Post this year, Combo Con expanded its gaming tournament and cosplay contest, added more vendors and featured a live concert by LittleVMills. About a dozen VFW members volunteered.

Combo Con’s ability to bridge the gap between veterans and the general community is “absolutely mesmerizing,” Desander said. Attendees were able to visit with the VFW volunteers, and the special guests – Woolie Madden, Kira Buckland and James Mills (LittleVMills) – “loved the cause.”

Attendees traveled from as far as Los Angeles and Montreal, Quebec, to attend Combo Con, Desander said, and this year’s atmosphere was more “active” compared to past outings.

“There was definitely a different type of buzz to it, where it seems like with previous years, it was a good atmosphere, it seems like the stride has finally happened,” Desander said.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
Office 816.756.3390
Fax 816.968.1157

WASHINGTON OFFICE

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
Office 202.543.2239
Fax 202.543.6719

info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

“There’s an established feeling into this.”

Going forward, Desander said he hopes to keep the same Posts involved and to continue to grow the event.

This article was featured in the July/August 2019 issue of VFW Checkpoint. If you're a Post, District or Department Commander and aren't receiving the Checkpoint e-newsletter, please contact the VFW magazine at magazine@vfw.org.