

from the front page

A DAILY SUN SPECIAL REPORT



Photos by Hannah Ridings | Daily Sun

Chelsea Hensley, of Boca Raton, cosplays as Luna Lovegood at MegaCon in Orlando.

“She’s just happy to be herself and doesn’t really care about other people’s opinions.”

Chelsea Hensley, of Boca Raton, studied ceramics in college, but after she graduated, she lost motivation for her art — until she discovered the art of cosplay, that is. “It’s been fun to learn different mediums and try different things,” said Hensley, who spent four months crafting the lion hat she was wearing as part of the Luna Lovegood cosplay she wore to MegaCon. Airy, creative and kind, Hensley has a demeanor like “Harry Potter’s” Lovegood. “I love her quirkiness and just her personality,” Hensley said. “She’s just happy to be herself and doesn’t really care about other people’s opinions.” Besides the fact it gives her an opportunity to use her artistic capabilities, Hensley loves the community that comes with cosplay. “I’ve made so many good friends,” she said. “I actually went to England on

a Harry Potter trip with some girls I met at Celebration at Universal last year. I think the friendships have been the best part of it.”

— Kristen Fiore, Daily Sun

“In the real world, I’m just pretending to be normal.”

Fifteen-year-old Em Grace started cosplaying in 2017 and admits that she’s been addicted ever since. Dressed from head to toe in a Scrap Baby costume that took her four and a half months to make out of foam, tubing and plastic, Em Grace, of Orlando, glided across the floor of the Orange County Convention Center in roller skates until a MegaCon official reminded her roller skates aren’t allowed, and she took them off. Em Grace’s Scrap Baby is a character from the tycoon game “Freddy Fazbear’s Pizzeria Simulator.” “It’s one of the coolest indie game franchises ever,” Em Grace said. “I love the character design, so I was like, ‘You know, let’s do this!’” The first time Em Grace dressed in cosplay, a wave of confidence washed over her. “I was like, ‘Holy crap! I’m myself. I feel connected to myself and confident,’” said Em Grace, who goes by the name Purplemako in the cosplay world. She dove into her newfound love of making and wearing costumes and meet other cosplayers. “In the real world, I feel almost like Superman when he’s Clark Kent in a disguise,” Em Grace said. “And when I’m in cosplay, I’m actually Superman. I’m the true me. In the real world, I’m just pretending to be normal.”

— Kristen Fiore, Daily Sun



Em Grace, of Orlando, cosplays as Scrap Baby at MegaCon in Orlando.

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A DAILY SUN SPECIAL REPORT



Lucian Schmit, left, of Largo, cosplays as Baby Junk Rat with his mother, Robyn Schmit, July 13 at MetroCon in Tampa.

"Everybody is really supportive. I wanted him to have a community like that."

Robyn Schmit, of Largo, has been cosplaying for about seven years, and now she's passing the hobby down to her 5-year-old son, Lucian. "I like the culture," Robyn explained, as bands of superheroes and video-game characters sauntered around her at Tampa's MetroCon in July. "This con specifically is very family-friendly," Robyn said. "Everybody is really supportive. I wanted him to have a community like that." Robyn and Lucian dressed up as Baby Junkrat and Junkrat's Mom from the video game "Overwatch," and Lucian said it made him feel happy. When

it comes to cosplay, your race, size and age don't matter, Robyn said. It also doesn't matter if you spent months building your costume, or just

put something together from your closet before heading out to the convention. "Everyone boosts each other up," she said. —Kristen Fiore, Daily Sun



Andrew Denn, of Inverness, cosplays as Venom on June 22 at Ocala Comic Con, held at the Hilton Hotel in Ocala.

"Some people really get into character and it's amazing."

Andrew Denn, of Inverness, describes himself as a grade A nerd. "I heard about Ocala Comic Con from a friend, so I came in my best attempt at a Star Wars character," Denn said. "I found that I loved the idea of ComicCon, so I started going to them more and more and fell in love with it." Denn grinned despite the fact that he was standing out in the June heat in a black bodysuit and Venom mask. He shrugged it off, saying other cosplays can get a lot sweeter, which is true. For Denn, dressing up is a way to feel awesome. "Everyone here is dressed as characters that I do know and don't know," he said. "Sometimes you see people portray their character and act the part the whole time they're at the con, and those are the people you really want to meet. Some people get really into character and it's amazing."

—Kristen Fiore, Daily Sun

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