

Maker Faire: Still Making Rhode Island Awesome

As we head further into the dog days of summer, everything is becoming saturated — political coverage, scandals, humidity and of course my clothes with sweat. Many times over the last few weeks I've seriously considered moving up above the Arctic circle, but one thing has kept me around: The Rhode Island Mini Maker Faire, the yearly exposition of what's possible in our own backyards, and it's coming as part of AS220's Foo Fest again this year!

The best way to get you interested in Maker Faire is to show you all the cool things, but unfortunately, I have limited space so you'll have to read about them instead. Yes, I am full of false hope today.

The RI Mini Maker Faire is a celebration of all skills and interests that people are passionate about. Everything from comic book art to strange bicycles to robotics and even beer making.

Why is it a 'mini' faire? There are two larger Maker Faires worth noting, the Worldwide and the regular Maker Faire, both of which happen annually and fairly far away from us. Worldwide Maker Faire is in NYC while the regular Maker Faire is out in San Mateo, California. Mini Maker Faires are a way of keeping things local and letting you meet your fellow community members and other enthusiasts.

Who exhibits at this event? Everyone! It doesn't matter what skill you have or what you do as long as you're passionate about it and want to share with the community at large and find others who are also interested. One of the original goals of Maker Faire was to take the STEM disciplines out of the labs and workshops, hidden away from public view, and make them the star of the show. The Maker Faires have since progressed beyond that to include many more skills as people start to learn new ways of doing things and mashup those skills to create some really cool things.

Who is exhibiting at this year's event?

Alone in Town — Art inspired by comic books and pop culture

BCA Keystone — Devices that can interact with the physical world from your PC

Fab Newport — A makerspace in Newport, showing off some of their recent work

HouseBat Studio — Witchy pins, patches, apparel

Learn To Solder — By far one of the most fun booths. Staff will be on hand to teach you the basics of soldering electric circuits and you'll even make your own blinky labs badge!

RI Museum of Science and Art — Spin Art, a 3'x3' interactive kinetic paint sculpture constructed from a bike

Robogames Firebot — A fire fighting robot that will be used in the 2017 National Robogames

RI Brewing Society — A live demonstration of how beer is made in our kitchens and backyards.

That is just a list of some of the highlights you'll see at the faire. The actual list is much longer and can be viewed on makerfaireri.com. You can also buy tickets or donate to the faire to keep events like this happening. If you are a maker and want to exhibit you can apply for free through the website. To all tinkerers and the people who love them, don't miss it!

Now to go back into the air conditioner I made...