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Kids Read Comics Event Brings Free Weekend Festival of Fun and Creativity to Chelsea

June 18 and 19 brings the third annual Kids Read Comics Celebration to Chelsea, Michigan. This year's event has its headquarters at the Chelsea District Library and spreads throughout the historic downtown, where sixteen shops and restaurants will take part by hosting artists and activities. The weekend will feature interactive events with comics and animation professionals, free comics giveaways from major publishers, a kids' costume parade down Main Street, and much more. Festivities run from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Saturday and noon until 6:00 p.m. on Sunday.

The nonprofit Kids Read Comics was organized to highlight comics' unique blend of words and pictures, and to foster fun, imagination, creativity, and a lifelong love of reading. Over the course of the weekend, kids and teens (and adults too) will have plenty of opportunity to meet and talk with more than forty comics creators at two artists' alleys, and buy comics from those artists and writers. They'll also be able to participate in hands-on cartooning and storytelling workshops, and attend panel discussions, art demonstrations, and fun events like the improvisational Quick Draw challenge.

The superhero costume parade begins at the library at 11:30 on Saturday morning, and the day's festivities continue with balloon making, a bounce house, airbrush face painting, kids' crafts, a comics scavenger hunt, and lunch with artists at Jet's Pizza. Saturday activities specifically oriented to teens will be found around the Chelsea Clocktower Commons, and include a drawing wall, a twenty-five-foot climbing tower, and cosplay classes, with a costume contest and masquerade party beginning at 5:00 p.m. (with a 4:15 lineup for contest participants). The Chelsea River Gallery will hold a 6:00-8:00 p.m. reception for "Comic Jam," an exhibit of original comic book art on display from May 28 through June 23, 2011.

Sunday will feature in-depth cartooning and storytelling workshops for kids, teens, and adults, along with professional development workshops for teachers and librarians who will learn how to use comics on behalf of young people in their work settings. On Sunday there will be a single artists' alley adding the teen-oriented artists who were at the Clocktower to the group at the library.

Special guests for the weekend festivities include Raina Telgemeier, cartoonist creator of the Eisner-Award-nominated middle-school comics memoir *Smile*; Ruth McNally Barshaw, author and illustrator of the popular Ellie McDoodle series of books; Barbara Slate, creator of *You Can Do a Graphic Novel*; Marc Sumerak, who writes the adventures of Spider-Man and numerous other superheroes for Marvel's all-ages line of comics; and Dave Roman, writer-artist of *Astronaut Academy* and an editor of *Nickelodeon Magazine*. Roman and Telgemeier will also give a kickoff talk at the Ann Arbor District Library on Friday, June 17, followed by a live performance of "Avatar: The Last Puppetcher" with Dave Roman and Kevin Coppa .

"Our guest list is outstanding," says Jerzy Drozd, an Ann Arbor cartoonist, teacher of cartooning, and Kids Read Comics organizer who is also Chelsea's current artist-in-residence. "We have a whole bunch of talented artists working in a range of styles accessible to younger readers and teens." Those artists include some of Drozd's own teenaged students.

Kids Read Comics is a totally free event, with the exception of food purchases and material sold by guest artists. It is held in cooperation with the Chelsea District Library, the Friends of the Library, the Chelsea Center for the Arts, River Gallery Fine Art and with a grant from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs. Additional information and a full schedule of events are available at www.kidsreadcomics.org.

About us:

The Chelsea District Library is nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide equal access to quality resources that serve the lifelong cultural, educational and informational needs and interests of all people. The Library currently serves 14,000 residents in the Chelsea district – City of Chelsea plus Dexter, Lima, Lyndon and Sylvan townships and more than 20,000 individuals visit the Library each month. The Library's state-of-the-art facility is an access point for information including: books, periodicals, DVDs, CDs, audiobooks, downloadable e-books, subscription databases as well as access to the Internet. In addition to providing dynamic services to complement and support local schools and other important community needs, the Chelsea District Library strives to present timely, interesting and high-quality programs and events to engage and enrich the Chelsea community.

Kids Read Comics (KRC) is a Michigan-based nonprofit dedicated to promoting comics and creativity for kids and teens. Throughout the year, KRC helps families, schools, libraries, and booksellers identify great comics for kids and ways to use them effectively. Each spring, the Kids Read Comics Celebration unites kids, teens, parents, teachers and librarians with professional artists and writers from the comics and animation fields, with the goal of introducing young people to worlds of imagination while unlocking their creative impulses. KRC was founded by a youth and teen librarian, a cartoonist and educator, a comic shop owner, and a comic book writer all living and working in Michigan.

Chelsea Center for the Arts (CCA) is the only professionally staffed arts center in Washtenaw County outside Ann Arbor, serving primarily the communities of Chelsea, Dexter, Grass Lake, Manchester, Pinckney, Saline, Stockbridge and other nearby areas. It organizes instruction, individually or in groups, by

highly accomplished practitioners for learners of all ages. It manages and maintains space for an art gallery, teaching studios, theatrical rehearsals, and occasional special lecture or performance events. It also provides artist-recruiting, administrative, and marketing services to other Chelsea-area organizations engaged in producing community cultural events and public art projects.

River Gallery Fine Art is a full service fine art gallery operating in a light filled, renovated 1898 building in central downtown Chelsea. In business since 2000 the gallery maintains a brisk schedule of hosting exhibits for regional artists in all media. River Gallery also provides research,consultation, art services and art placement for hospitals, corporations and small businesses. The gallery curates and produces exhibits off-site for universities and businesses seeking an art presence for staff, clients and visitors. The gallery is proud of their community partnerships and have co-produced events that include literature, music and dance. Most recently River Gallery created and hosted a two day workshop at the gallery for students from Easter Michigan University's Arts Management program. River Gallery believes that participating in the creation and production of the arts for the community enhances social, intellectual and creative opportunity for all citizens.

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