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**For Immediate Release**

March 5, 2015

## **NWA Fencing Foundation hosting annual Dark Knight Marathon Fencing provides excellent opportunities for children, adults**

BENTONVILLE—The Dark Knight Marathon returns to Bentonville on April 25 as the Northwest Arkansas Fencing Foundation raises money to enable more students to participate in the sport.

The NWAFF is the nonprofit side of the NWA Fencing Center. The Dark Knight Marathon is an event where the members earn sponsorships and they joust in a unique round-robin or “ladder” fashion. Multiple bouts happen simultaneously. The event starts 6 p.m. April 25 at the Center (1100 SE 14<sup>th</sup> St. Suite 16 in Bentonville). The Marathon ends when the players become too tired to continue (often after midnight).

Participants usually seek a flat-sponsorship or a per-touch (point) sponsorship. The public is invited to attend for free and enjoy the jousting while learning about the many benefits of fencing. The money raised through the foundation makes it possible for students of all socio-economic backgrounds to participate in fencing. Full annual funding for the average fencing student is \$1,000.

Both the NWAFF and NWAFC work to create an environment that is about honor, respect and learning, executive director Laura Kirk said. The center offers a study room where students can do their homework and study after school before lessons. The center has a minimum grade-point average required of all students.

“It can be used as a path to college,” Kirk said of fencing. “There are better chances to get fencing scholarships than (other sports). We’re trying to create life-changing opportunities for young people.”

The fencing program helps build self-esteem, self-discipline, and improves focus and concentration—all attributes that translate into other aspects of the student’s life, Kirk said.

NWAFC has served more than 1,000 children ages 6 to 18. This includes children while they are residing at the NWA Children’s Shelter, children participating in Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and children qualified for school free lunch programs. The center also serves young adults, usually about the age of 23 to 35 (although many college students also participate). Students from the center have been involved with the Olympics and other national and international competitions.

### **About the NWA Fencing Foundation**

NWAFC partners with Northwest Arkansas Fencing Foundation to provide a complete community fencing program. The Northwest Arkansas Fencing Foundation is a 501(c)3 Corporation committed to offering life changing opportunities to under-served and at-risk youth in the areas of higher education, college scholarships, nutrition education and obesity prevention, through the sport of fencing. NWAFC is a member of the United States Fencing Association (Oklahoma Division).

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NWAFF was founded in 2010 and opened its existing facility on 14<sup>th</sup> Street in Bentonville in October 2011.