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NWAFF to host Darth Knight Fundraiser

Participants can meet Darth Vader, experience the sport of fencing

BENTONVILLE—“Darth Vader” will be a special guest at the Darth Knight Fundraiser for Northwest Arkansas Fencing Foundation Saturday, Dec. 12. The fundraiser’s focus will be allowing participants the opportunity to try fencing for themselves (sorry, no light sabers).

“We thought it would be fun to have a Darth Vader themed event with *The Force Awakens* coming out the following weekend,” said Laura Kirk, NWAFF executive director. “This will be just like our Try Fencing event in April. People love the chance to try out fencing.”

The event will be 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Dec. 12 at the NWA Fencing Club (1100 SE 14th St. Ste 16 in Bentonville). Tickets are \$20 on the NWAFC website in advance, or \$25 at the door. For more information, visit the NWA Fencing Center website <http://nwafc.org/>.

Children must be 5 years old to participate and adults are welcome to participate.

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. The NWA Fencing Foundation is the nonprofit arm of the NWA Fencing Center.

“Both the NWAFF and NWA Fencing Center work to create an environment that is about honor, respect and learning,” 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.”

Fencing is one of the only sports that people of most ages can enjoy and it contributes to healthier lifestyles including lowering risk of obesity.

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.

NWAFF 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 and reduced 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.