

On the record ... with Patrick O'Malley

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DeKALB – Patrick O'Malley has been in the video game business since he was 12 years old.

"Star Worlds started out on Jan. 11, 1985," O'Malley said. "My mom was part of the business back then because I was like 12 and I needed someone to sign rent documents and leases."

Twenty-eight years later, O'Malley still co-owns Star Worlds Arcade at 1234 E. Lincoln Highway with Glenn Thomas. The arcade is one of the last remaining video game arcades in the country and was the subject of a recent 30-minute student documentary, "Star Worlds: A Pocket Full of Tokens and I'm Heading to the Arcade."



Patrick O'Malley (Curtis Clegg - cclegg@shawmedia.com)

The arcade's motto is "Play today the games you miss from yesterday!" The recent Disney movie "Wreck-It Ralph" features characters from several 80s-era video games and has caused a minor resurgence in interest in vintage video games.

"Being a Disney product I knew it would be fun, and it would be safe for families," O'Malley said of the movie. "It's important to keep a family environment for us."

O'Malley sat down with MidWeek reporter Curtis Clegg to discuss his long career in the video game industry, his brushes with some of the biggest names in the industry, and his role as an ambassador for the vintage machines of a bygone era.

MidWeek: When and how did you get started in the arcade business?

Patrick O'Malley: I started collecting the games when I was 10 or 11 and my collection was starting to get so big, and my friends were always hanging out at my house constantly. It was more of a neighborhood arcade and I expanded into doing outside vending work where I was supplying games to restaurants, and that's what brought me to DeKalb. ...Originally we were in Maple Park, which is a smaller community. The original arcade that I bought from a guy in the early 80s was in Geneva but we have been in DeKalb for eight years now.

MW: Are you starting to see second-generation customers at the arcade?

PO: That is the most amazing thing. When it first happens, it kind of catches you by surprise. Right now I have friends that I have been friends with for years, and they have always been my customers at the arcade and now their kids are coming in and some of them are old enough now that they don't even have to come in with their parents. It's really cool to see that.

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