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'Everything is awesome' when Steel City LUG returns to Fayette County Fair

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Submitted Photo

Steel City Lego User Group

Submitted Photo

Josh Hall, founder of Steel City Lego User Group, created this Lego display of Pittsburgh-based television icon, Mister Rogers. Notice Mister Rogers is putting on his sneakers while his sweater collection hangs in the closet behind him. Steel City LUG will appear at the Fayette County Fair from 2 to 8 p.m. Aug. 3-4 in the Youth Building.



one in Uniontown and one in Confluence. They host quarterly business meetings at members' homes but often participate in public events, such as the International Children's Festival in Pittsburgh where they helped youths build Lego cars to race on a pinewood derby track.

When the popular and critically acclaimed "The Lego Movie" came out in 2014, Warner Brothers contacted the group to build a display of the movie title for premiere at the Loew's Theater at the Waterfront shopping and dining complex in Homewood.

"We build for libraries, museums and had our displays in a downtown art gallery," Hall said.

Hall himself has competed at and twice won a Lego competition in Squirrel Hill. He said his winning entries included

Posted: Wednesday, July 29, 2015 8:12 am

By **Frances Borsodi Zajac**
 0 comments

Praised for their creativity as well as their kindness, Steel City Lego User Group is being invited back for a return engagement to the Fayette County Fair.

"They're wonderful," said Jennifer Deichert, extension educator for Penn State Extension of the group that first came to the fair last year. "They're really positive and really good and like to share their passion for Legos."

The group's also fond of the Fayette County Fair with founder Josh Hall noting, "Everyone's super nice, super friendly."

Steel City LUG is scheduled to appear from 2 to 8 p.m. Aug. 3-4 in the Youth Building at the Fayette County Fairgrounds, located along Route 119 in Dunbar Township. Members will bring with them displays built from the colorful, plastic building bricks that seem to have no limits on the imagination, making Lego one of the world's largest manufacturer of toys.

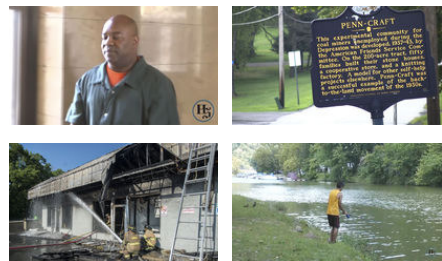
It's that opportunity to be clever and original that entices people to Legos where they can build with kits that feature everything from doll houses to superheroes and world-famous structures such as the White House, Eiffel Tower, Taj Mahal and, for a time, included the Fayette County landmark Fallingwater.

But many fans, such as Hall, forgo kits to use their own ingenuity to create displays, and there are those who simply like being around the process.

"We're a bunch of people who enjoy Legos," said Hall of Steel City LUG, noting that some group members build while others like sorting bricks and others just like to hang out.

Hall founded the Pittsburgh-based group in 2012 after being a distant member of the Philadelphia-based Penn LUG. Steel City LUG has about 120 members, including

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a replica of Pittsburgh Penguin Sidney Crosby and a replica of the University of Pittsburgh's Cathedral of Learning, which now makes its home at Pitt. The cathedral also made it onto the Lego website for consideration as a kit. While it didn't earn enough votes, the project brought more attention to Hall and Steel City LUG.

For the Fayette County Fair, Steel City LUG is planning to bring a five-foot-long bridge with the word Pittsburgh spelled out on the side. Across the top will be a display of Pittsburgh landmark buildings, such as the David Lawrence Convention Center.

Hall is also thinking of bringing his display of Mister Rogers, the beloved Pittsburgh television personality, which won second place at the Squirrel Hill competition. The display shows Fred Rogers in his television home, sitting down to put on his shoes with the closet door open to reveal his sweater collection.

Like many Lego lovers, Hall played with the building bricks as a child but said, "I went into the dark ages in high school and college when you don't play with them anymore."

Hall, who has a master's degree in organizational leadership from Robert Morris University and is an IT manager for a large, financial company in downtown Pittsburgh, came back to Legos after buying his first house when his mother told him to take his stuff with him.

He began playing with Legos once again and creating displays, posting photographs of them on a blog. They were seen by a teacher who invited him to her school. Eventually, Hall discovered an online, worldwide interest in Legos where people are known as Adults Fond of Legos (AFOL) and official Lego User Groups that are recognized by the Lego company. He joined Penn LUG where he was a member until someone suggested he start his own group.

Asked how many Legos he owns, Hall said, "I would say close to 200,000 pieces and they're all organized."

Hall buys them from people getting rid of their collections or online through www.bricklink.com, where he said people all over the world go to buy and sell Lego parts.

He enjoys sharing his interest in Legos with his two young daughters and, along with other volunteers, will be glad to do the same with the public at the fair.

"It's a hobby for anybody," said Hall. "There's a lot of artistic expression. Everybody's welcome."

More information on the group is available at www.steelcitylug.com.

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