

TREKKING FOR UTOPIA

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Charting a course for a utopian and egalitarian society, the U.S.S. Enterprise made its maiden voyage in 1967 on the futuristic television series "Star Trek."

Twenty-five years later, the original show has lent its cast and props to six major motion pictures and has spawned a new television series, "Star Trek: The Next Generation."

Fans flocked to the Chicago Southland Expo Center in Harvey last weekend to view the T-shirts and collectors' photos and posters and to pay homage to the television series and the movies.

Those present cited the series' attraction as going beyond the show to the global, egalitarian and environmental issues emphasized by the original creators.

Chris Spencer of the Chicago Chapter of the International Federation of Trekkers, a "Star Trek" fan club, said they try to fulfill the creator's dream in their efforts.

"We try to live the dream of the humanitarian society and involve ourselves with the community by working with the environment and on social issues," Spencer said. "Star Trek presented an optimistic view of the future. We are making an effort to approximate life in the same manner."

Chicago resident Kevin Hall agreed with Spencer's summation of the continuing attraction of the series. Personally he prefers the new series over the old series.

"It ("Star Trek") presents a picture of a real, possible future,"

Hall said. "It shows the best of humanity and I love science fiction. I'd like to see these things come true."

Andrew Bailey of Richton Park and Bobby Dannowitz of Steger weren't even born when the original show premiered, but both have become big fans.

"I've liked science fiction since I was a child," said Bailey, 12.

"When I saw Star Trek, I thought it was perfect."

Dressed in captain's attire, Dannowitz, 14, enjoys attending the conventions.

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They like the same things I do," he said. "It's great to see Star Trek."

For him, the most enjoyable aspect is the message implied throughout the series.

"`Star Trek` gives a ray of hope," Dannowitz said. "We hope the future will be just like this. Someday we may all be out there in our starships and following a course like in the main titles: `To boldly go where no man has gone before.`"

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