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OU grad makes comics his life

By **Rebecca Wyatt Thomas**, OU Web Writer

From a young age, Lauren Becker, CAS '94, has been collecting comics and collectible toys—it was a hobby that helped pay for his English degree from Oakland University. After the death of Superman in the DC comics in 1992, Becker made \$10,000 in one day and decided then to open a store and make it his business.

"I have been collecting comics for more than 30 years. My uncle gave me a big stack of comics and that's what got me started," said Becker, whose favorite graphic novel was "The Watchman." "Back in high school, I used to do local comic shows and make money from it. Originally, I went to college to become a teacher, but I was doing the comic book thing on the side to pay for college and it really took off."

With the death of Superman in 1992, Becker made \$10,000 in one day off of his comic books. He said that solidified his desire to open a store.

Becker opened his first store in Clawson nine years ago. This fall, he opened another location of Warp 9 in the Auburn Square shopping center, located at the northeast corner of Squirrel and Walton roads. He did some research and learned there were very few comic and collectible stores in the area so he decided to open Warp 9. Becker would like to eventually open a third store in the metro Detroit area.

Besides the two locations, Becker also sells many of his books online. He said about 40 percent of his sales go overseas.

Since he started dealing comics, Becker said the audience has changed.

"Twenty years ago, comics were looked at as a 'nerd thing' but today it's a cool kitsch kind of thing," Becker said. He said the average age of the comic collector is 18-40 and while most are male, some females are also involved. Becker said Hollywood is using comic characters more for major movies and music artists are also putting out comics.

Becker said many of his customers are regulars. He said many come in each Wednesday for the newest issues. He said new fans stop in his stores regularly to check out what he has.

Being surrounded by comics all day hasn't changed Becker's view of collecting. He still has his own collection of original art, vintage toys and non-mainstream comic books.



Lauren Becker opened Warp 9 last year. It is his second comic book and collectibles store.

SUMMARY

From a young age, Lauren Becker, CAS '94, has been collecting comics and collectible toys—it was a hobby that helped pay for his English degree from Oakland University. After the death of Superman in the DC comics in 1992, Becker made \$10,000 in one day and decided then to open a store and make it his business. Becker opened his first store in Clawson nine years ago. This fall, he opened another location of Warp 9 in the Auburn Square shopping center, located at the northeast corner of Squirrel and Walton roads.

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