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Pinball expo tilts nostalgia toward Herrin

By Codell Rodriguez, The Southern

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HERRIN - Brad Arnold had not played the Six Million Dollar Man pinball game since he was child.

But thanks to the Heartland Pinball and Arcade Supershow, Arnold of Herrin can relive the adventures of Steve Austin via metal ball and flippers once again.

The show is back at the Herrin Civic Center for its third year, and Arnold hasn't missed one yet.

"I just like pinball," Arnold said. "I grew up playing in the '60s and '70s, and I like playing now."

Ken Hall, member of the Southern Illinois Pinball Players Association (SIPPA), said the group puts the show on every year because the members have a passion for pinball, and they want to be able to share that passion.

"We just decided to share our enthusiasm and our hobby with other people," Hall said.

The show had about 95 machines Friday, and Hall said there would be more than 100 Saturday. The games range from the 1950s to a brand new machine based on "The Dark Knight." The machines are donated from private collections. Some, such as a Popeye machine, were donated for charity.

In addition to the games, silent auctions offer a variety of items to benefit Big Brothers Big Sisters and Shawnee Crisis Pregnancy Center. Hall said they were able to donate \$2,400 in 2007, and they expect to exceed that amount this year.

In addition to the charity, Hall said one of his favorite aspects of the shows is the crowds, especially parents who share their favorite childhood games with their children.

"What I'm most pleased with is seeing families coming in together," Hall said.

Rush Luangsuwan of Chicago said meeting people is one of his favorite parts of the shows, but it all comes down to a love of pinball.

"It's the randomness of the game," Luangsuwan said. "With pinball, you never get the same game twice."

Arnold said the nostalgia brings him back every year along with being able to "hear the kerplunk when you win a game." He said SIPPA deserves a lot of credit for bringing back such memories and executing it so well.

"They guys who put this on do a great job," Arnold said.

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DETAILS

The Heartland Pinball and Arcade Supershow continues from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday at the Herrin Civic Center. Admission is \$10.

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