

Local woman wins top honours at Anime North

By **MELANIE HENNESSEY**
Special to the IFP

It's not every day one can say they've earned a prestigious award just for doing what they love.

But such is the case for Georgetown's Ruth Steinback, whose passion for comics and costumes recently earned her top honours at Anime North, the largest Canadian convention that celebrates Japanese animation.

The 29-year-old artist and her friend, Catharine Poehlman of Oakville, won Best in Show for the costumes they carefully handcrafted based on characters from the elaborate Japanese comic, Trinity Blood.

The pair went up against dozens of other "cosplayers," or costume players, at the event in Toronto last month and came out with top marks for both workmanship and presentation.

"We were shocked to win Best in Show, which is the

highest award you can get at one of these competitions," said Steinback. "The level of the costuming at Anime North is just amazing and the competition is fierce."

Steinback spent hundreds of hours over the past year creating her Seth Nightroad butterfly costume— an elaborate green and gold creation that was meticulously patterned, painted, gold-leafed, sewn and beaded. She said she also cut and styled a wig and got a pair of fitted fangs to wear, since her character is a vampire.

"This was the most intense costume I've ever worked on," she said. "It was very time-consuming, with a lot of discovery along the way. I'm really proud of it."

As part of the masquerade judging process, she said every detail of her costume was closely inspected for everything from finished seams to loose threads. She and Poehlman were also judged on their stage presentation— a one-



Ruth Steinback and her friend, Catharine Poehlman of Oakville, won Best in Show for the costumes they carefully handcrafted based on characters from the elaborate Japanese comic, Trinity Blood.

Photo by Z-is-Eternal

minute opportunity to showcase their work in character.

"We tried to make something that's accurate to our source material, like we walked off the page," said Steinback. "It's a mixture of doing quality work with an emphasis on budget and wearability in a convention setting."

Despite its elaborate detail,

Steinback said her costume only cost between \$100 and \$150 to make—a far cry from the \$1,500-plus that some cosplayers spend on Trinity Blood costumes.

The Georgetown District High School graduate has long been artistically inclined and began developing her sewing skills about 10 years ago when she and her mother

crafted her first costume.

Since then she has gone on to create and compete in several different costumes, which have earned her best in class and best lighting awards, along with an honourable mention for her wig work.

Aside from getting to make and wear spectacular costumes, Steinback said her favourite part of anime conventions is the opportunity to share her knowledge of costuming with fellow cosplayers.

"I love being able to share techniques with other costumers, especially ones that are just starting out," she said. "The majority of cosplayers are incredibly passionate and supportive of each other."

Now, Steinback said she and Poehlman are making plans to attend CostumeCon—a costume and cosplay convention - when it comes back to Toronto in 2017.

To check out more of Steinback's creations, visit www.brightlingworks.ca.

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Dave really missed the families and friends and the relationships that he had built a few years ago and finds it amazing to see so many familiar faces a few years later. Mike McCallum has been there since the place opened and is the backbone of their food service operation. They have 101 flavours of wings to choose from and it will be Mike "machine" McCallum tossing your favorite sauce on most nights!

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