

Dr. Who?

TV character's fans flock to Madison convention

By Sunny Schubert
Feature writer

The first thing you need to know about people like Karen Lundquist, Jim Nirschl and Andreas Tronso is that they're just normal, everyday people.

Ms. Lundquist is a postal carrier from DeForest. Nirschl works in an auto-supply store. Tronso — well, he's only 2½, but he's as normal as any other 2½-year-old.

Lives the role

Except, says his mother, Robin Tronso, "He's Dr. Who.

"Everywhere he goes — to the supermarket, to the park — he's Dr. Who. He never goes anywhere without his Dr. Who hat — not even to church."

She sighs. "I keep hoping he'll turn into a fireman someday."

Fortunately, Andreas' brother Jens-Peter, 6, is not quite as devoted to dressing like a character from the "Dr. Who" television show. It would be hard to go through life inside a cardboard servo-robot suit.

Ms. Lundquist, Nirschl and the Tronso family were among hundreds of devoted "Dr. Who" fans attending a convention Friday at the Dane County Coliseum.

The local popularity of the program can be seen in numbers from WHA-TV, which broadcasts the program on Sunday afternoons: "Dr. Who" fans have contributed more than \$45,000 during the station's most recent pledge drive — almost 20 percent of the total collected.

The money comes from people like Ms. Lundquist, founder of the local fan club: The Whovian High Order of Mid-Wisconsin, or WHOM for short.

Wouldn't have thought of it

"Three years ago, I had never heard of 'Dr. Who,'" she says. "Two years ago, if you had told me I would start a fan club, I would have said 'I don't do dumb things like that.' But here I am."

It was the second "Dr. Who" convention for Nirschl, who drove down from Appleton for the event and brought his Dalek with him. (Daleks are highly intelligent, utterly ruthless robots who roll around the universe yelling "Exterminate!" at Dr. Who.)

It is one fine Dalek: all metal, motorized, big enough for Nirschl to ride in, complete with extender arm, ray gun and voice modulator. Nirschl built it in eight months, working evenings in an auto-body shop.

"You don't want to know how much it cost," he says, laughing and shaking his head. "I sure don't."

Ask these people what they find so appealing about a British kids' show, most



As Dr. Who, Andreas Tronso, 2½, controls brother Jens-Peter, 6, but not the Dalek, behind.

— State Journal photo by Carolyn Pflasterer

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remarkable for its primitive special effects, and they laugh.

"I love science fiction," says Nirschl. " 'Dr. Who' lets me dream."

Caryl Johnsrud, a Coliseum concessions worker who is also a fan,

Trivia answer

Houdini, whose real name was Ehrich Weiss, was born in Appleton, April 6, 1874.

credits Tom Baker, the fourth actor (of six) to portray the Doctor, with starting her addiction.

"I like his bug eyes. I like the way he mumbles. Oh, I'm hooked all right," she says with a grin.

Says Mrs. Transo: "Dr. Who has a way of making light of danger, but he's never violent. He treats his female companions as equals. That's why I let the kids watch it."

Why does she watch it? "Dr. Who is not handsome, he's not sexy — he's just terribly appealing. Besides, the kids wouldn't let me watch anything else."