

Bringing people together: Kadabra's Cards and Games hopes to bring Alton a tabletop shop

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ALTON – Board games and card games are traditions nearly as old as civilization itself.

Even the noted video game maker Nintendo began as a card game company in the 19th Century – far before anyone was dreaming of plumbers donning red jumpsuits rescuing pink princesses from giant monkeys and spike-backed lizard turtles. Nintendo came nearly full-circle during the 1990s during the Pokemon craze, which included a math-based trading card game featuring artistic depictions of the imaginative monsters. Like many children in the 1990s, Aaron Blackketter loved Pokemon, especially the bipedal psychic Baphomet-looking creature named “Kadabra.”

Also like many children in the 1990s, Blackketter brought his love of Pokemon with him into adulthood. He started reselling Pokemon trading cards online through a digital

marketplace called “Kadabra's Cards.” As he grew, though, he added “and Games” to the name to reflect his growing passion for tabletop games. That digital market evolved into an actual business in March 2018 when Blackketter said he made “Kadabra's Cards and Games” official.

While still digital, Blackketter and his wares can be found at pop-up shops throughout the area, including Germania and Tony's. He has also hosted game nights for the community at well-loved places such as Old Bakery Beer Company. Board games have evolved significantly from the days of Clue, Sorry, Trouble and Mouse Trap. People can now spend hours having fun and building strategy thought titles like the mainstream “Settlers of Catan,” which makes traditional strategy games such as Risk seem simple.

In the future, Blackketter said he sees a brick-and-mortar tabletop shop in Alton.

“That's my ultimate goal, to bring Alton its very own tabletop game store,” Blackketter said in a Facebook message. “We just have to play it smart and build our inventory before we open our doors. We want to make sure Alton wants us here and is willing to support us before making that huge leap into a physical location.”

Currently, that inventory includes more than 40 of the top-selling tabletop board games, collectibles and trading cards from two Wizards of the Coast giants: The Pokemon Trading Card Game and Magic: The Gathering.

“I believe Alton has a need because we need another activity for families to do locally that isn't strictly shopping,” he said. “I want to be able to bring our demo events to the area on a weekly basis. Our mission statement is 'to bring people together through personable entertainment at a great value.' We are all about getting friends and family gathered around the table for that personable interaction. We need more of that these days and more time away from all of the electronics.”





Blackketter said he has been seeing several familiar faces at the demos he has hosted for his games. He said each has also grown in size and has been doing better, adding the growth has been admittedly slow – something he hopes improves in 2019.

“I really hope I can bring a positive effect to the community,” he said. “I know board games can help bring people together and hopefully we will be able to provide people with an outlet that will allow them to meet new people all while competing or collaborating on a casual or competitive level.”

While competition is fun and essential in gaming, it can doom a small business. Blackketter said he does not sell anything not found through giant international conglomerates such as Amazon, Walmart, Target and Gamestop. He said such places cannot offer the personable interaction. Blackketter himself said he is familiar with the majority of what he has in stock and has a good taste in what other games people may like based on what they already know they enjoy. In the area, however, the only other locations offering what Blackketter wants to see is Riverbend Games in East Alton and Heroic Adventures in Edwardsville – both of whom Blackketter said are great at the services they provide. He simply wants a place closer to home as well.

As of now, Blackketter runs the shop on his own with help from his wife and other family members who sometimes come with him to assist with demos. The online store Blackketter operates can be found at www.KadabrasCards.com, but he said people in Alton can message the card and game shop on Facebook or contact him at KadabrasCards@gmail.com to avoid “pesky shipping fees.”