

Interview: Keith David Severson

By HispaBrick Magazine®
Picture by Keith David Severson

HBM: Which were your main objectives when you joined the CEE Team?

KDS: When I joined the CEE team with Jan, Kim, and Kevin, the first thing I focused on was to understand what they do day-to-day. They have a very complicated job in working with both internal LEGO® teams and the entire AFOL community around the world. My first objectives, was to explore opportunities to create some standardisation and simplify things, both for the team and the AFOLs. Realizing there has been a clear trend the community steadily growing at a faster pace than the team is capable of; this became a theme for all of 2014. The programs and systems, which we made a couple years ago, worked fantastically! But to our surprise, the AFOL community grew so fast that we needed to re-think everything we do. The Team dedicated 2014 to a "Year of Change" with the goal to make sure we have programs and systems set up that can handle the growth, not just today or tomorrow, but many years in the future! It has been a difficult process but very exciting at the same time.

HBM: Working with the community, what is your opinion about the AFOLs and the status of the community itself?

KDS: What I believe is that LEGO wants to be better at connecting with the community. What we are excited to see is LUGs are hosting more events and utilizing the support programs to a much higher degree. For example, in 2013 CEE provided support to 275 events, in 2014 we have already provided support to 480 events! In addition, this year the "LUGBULK" program had a record year of having 125 LUG's participate which resulted in over 5,000, AFOLs getting access to loose elements in bulk. Clearly, the community is thriving and with this strong pulse we need to make sure that we are prepared for the future!

HBM: Which expectations do you have about the new Ambassadors Network?

KDS: One of the most important things I hope the ambassadors can feel is not simply a new way to engage with the LEGO group, but that the ambassadors see it as a great opportunity to better connect with LUG's around them. We see an amazing amount of effort and energy coming from individual LUGs, but we firmly believe the community will become even stronger if we can help connect LUG's and encourage partnerships in activities.

HBM: Will the new relationship structure between LEGO and the Communities speed up processes like the LUGBULK program or event support? Does the new program mean LEGO might increase the amount of sets/products for AFOLs and collectors?

KDS: We have just completed a re-writing every community support program we offer. This is now available on the new LAN site in the F.A.Q. section. (<https://lan.lego.com/faq>). Our goal with this has been to simplify the programs for both LUGs and CEE. We want to make sure support is deployed to Recognized LUGs as fast as possible. Additionally, there is a great public side of the site. This means that LAN is not just for LUG Ambassadors but it



is a resource for any AFOL. For example, our F.A.Q. with all the programs and documentation is public. Then we also migrated our community team blog to the site. We also have all the LUG events listed so people can be aware of an upcoming event. Finally, we are excited to have a global map that shows the location of every LUG that is a part of the LAN. This means that if a person wants to join a LUG they can find their nearest one as well as contact information.

HBM: Finally, we were shocked about the cancellation of the LEGO Fan Weekend. Can you explain why this decision was taken?

KDS: Unfortunately, this was the last year of LEGO Fan Weekend. We had to take a hard look at how much effort we put into every activity that we do with the community. With the community growing so rapidly around the world and we really truly believe in providing equal opportunity, it resulted in focussing and prioritizing our activities that could achieve this. When reviewing the LEGO Fan Weekend, it became clear that while this was a truly amazing event it did not fully live up to our new goals of ensuring a global equal opportunity and being effective with the resources we have within our department. What I mean by that is the LEGO Fan Weekend attracts an audience of a few hundred AFOLs, but with the same amount of energy applied elsewhere, i.e. LAN, we can now engage with thousands of AFOLs. It was a difficult process but we are committed to focusing on few programs that can deliver a high quality level of engagement and services to the global AFOL community.

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