

# Eye on Entertainment

## a weekend at the office

### Special to the Lion's Eye

The day was cold and dreary. Pouring rain fell from the sky. Thousands of feet pounded the sidewalk, clamoring under umbrellas. People ducked in and out of buildings, looking for cover, going to meetings, shuffling papers. Some people smiled; some laughed. But it was the end of the week, so no one frowned. Yes, it was just another Friday at The Office.

But this wasn't just any office. It was The Office Convention, held October 26-28 in Scranton, PA. The convention was held for all fans, near and far, of NBC's top sitcom hit, The Office. The show is based in the small city in northeastern Pennsylvania, and the storylines follow the mundane world of working in an office with a variety of personalities, all led by a truly clueless boss. The city has finally fallen onto the radar screen with many fans of the show, and under the guidance of the entertainment newspaper Electric City News, The Scranton Times, and The Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, the idea of a convention for fans of the show was born.

The convention garnered well over 5000 'Dunderheads' who gathered for the three day event that celebrated everything about Dunder-Mifflin and the quirky cast of the television show. Thirteen cast members and over 20 writers, directors and producers attended the convention, and highlighted various events throughout the weekend. "This is truly overwhelming," said Phyllis Smith, who plays salesperson Phyllis Vance on the show. "We work on a closed set, so there is no audience, so we really don't understand the magnitude of how the work we do affects people. But to see this? It is incredible."

Smith isn't the only cast member who was taken aback by welcome and warmth of the fans who came to pay homage to their favorite TV show. Angela Kinsey, who plays militant accountant Angela Martin in the show, was even more impressed with this trip to Scranton, her second this year.

"Brian (Baumgartner) and I came here back in May and we were completely impressed by the warm welcome,

but this tops it," she says with a huge smile. "Scranton is absolutely great and I can't wait to come back."

The convention itself started off with a bang on October 26 with Al Roker and The Today Show kicking off the event from the University of Scranton campus. Several cast members joined him, as well as thousands of fans. The weekend consisted of a variety of fan based events, like a street fair, an outdoor afternoon concert with The Scantones, who wrote the show's theme song, a character look-alike contest, and The Office Olympics, as well as showings of episodes from the first three seasons held at various venues throughout the city.

Many fans, however, were most impressed with the autograph sessions with all of the cast, a Cast Q&A on Saturday evening, the Bloggers Breakfast on Sunday morning, with cast members who write online blogs about their work and the show, and the Writer's Block panel, where the writing team for the show gathered to discuss the way they come up with storylines, how they write comedy, the evolution of catch-phrases that have been born from the show, and the basics behind the success of the show.

Greg Daniels, creator and executive producer of the show, also gave some insights into the ins and outs of working in the Hollywood world.

"We came here and it was totally more than we ever expected. I mean, you sit in a room and you have all this research, and you write as close to what you think this place will be like, and then you actually see it and it goes beyond your imagination," he says. "For example, we tape in a sound stage in Van Nuys, CA, and it is a dusty desert. We come here, and there are all of these lush and beautiful woods. I just wish we could re-create that back in California."

Daniels also gave some ideas into character development for the show. "Unfortunately, we have had some characters from the past couple seasons leave the show because of contract issues," he says. "The reality is that we wish we could have all our characters be there all the time, but union rules say you have to give them so many episodes per season in order to retain them as a regular. So Karen (played by actress Rashida Jones) had to leave because

she was offered a full-time gig. Roy (played by actor David Denman) isn't dead and I can only hope to write him back in at some point in time."

Writer Michael Schlur, who also cameos as Mose Schrute on the show, discussed at length how he and his writing team spent much of Saturday exploring the Scranton area to get more ideas to make the show more "Scranton-like." "We took the Lackawanna Coal Mine tour in the hopes of finding something interesting to incorporate into the show, and at the end of it, we were absolutely somber when we saw what these miners actually went through to live and work," he says. "But we did find out that Scranton has hundreds and hundreds of funeral homes, and that is just funny in a very dark way, so we are hoping we can write that into the script in the future."

The convention also boasted a great display of props and costumes at The Lackawanna Trolley Museum. Kent Zbornak, co-executive producer of the show, felt that the costume display would be something everyone would really love.

"I chose costumes from memorable episodes," he says. "I mean, we brought the dress that Pam (played by actress Jenna Fischer) wore in the scene from the episode Casino Night where she and Jim kiss. All the costumes and props that are in the display are things that people will want to see, want to touch and will fondly remember."

Scranton is known for being The Electric City, and the city seemed to breathe electric and excitement throughout the entire weekend. Organizers of the event are confident that this will not be the last convention, and mentioned the planning has already begun for next year.

The boss of The Office, Michael Scott (played by actor Steve Carell) said it best: "Ain't no party like a Scranton party, 'cause a Scranton party don't stop." Let's hope this is the beginning of the party and it keeps on going. For more information about The Office and The Office Convention, visit [www.theofficeconvention.com](http://www.theofficeconvention.com).

## People Poll with Brittany Neimeth

What was your favorite or most memorable Halloween costume?



**Christina Furia**  
English  
"I was a hippie this year, and I liked it."



**Joe McFetridge**  
Art Education  
"When I went as a grandma. It was hardcore."



**John Kennedy**  
IST  
"When I was in third grade I was a jawa and I looked exactly like one."



**Jon Batty**  
Business  
"I was a milk carton and I put a missing picture on the side of it and it



**Rahel Teklegiorgis**  
DUS  
"Foxy Cleopatra with the fro, aviators, and bell bottoms...yeah!"



**Raquel Silano**  
Finance and Broadcast Journalism  
"Pebbles because it was hand made for me out of fabric when I was six."