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Drones, robots and a carnival of creativity delight kids of all ages at Maker Faire Miami



Families check out the gadgets at Maker Faire Miami 0:56



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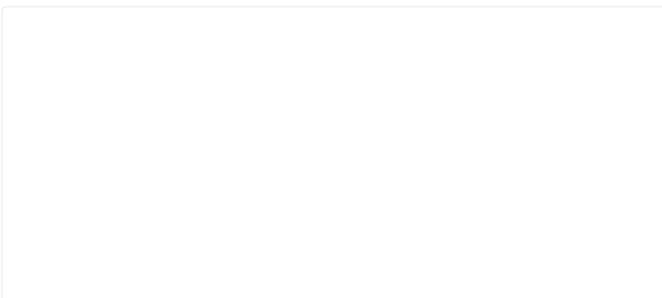
BY NANCY DAHLBERG
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“It’s a work in progress.” You hear that a lot at the Maker Faire — and it is kind of the point.

On Saturday, scores of artisans, engineers, entrepreneurs and do-it-yourselfers of all stripes delighted future makers of all ages with flying drones, self-driving cars, robots and the latest in virtual reality and gaming technologies at the Maker Faire Miami at Miami Dade College. There were some crashes, power failures and misfires, but that is all part of the experience at this family-friendly weekend event that turned the Wolfson Campus into a carnival of creativity.

The FPV Micro Racing Drone exhibit was a hit with kids — and their parents. Flying the miniature drones through an obstacle course of hoops and tunnels was harder than it looked. Some of the kids got up close and personal with the drone technology by viewing it through immersive goggles.

Many of the “makes” on display are still being tested and tweaked. Take SkillCourt, for example. Gudmundur “Gummi” Traustason, a soccer coach, is developing a company around his work in progress — an integrated soccer training system. Kick the ball against a series of backboards, and his creation delivers analytics to track an athlete’s progress and technique. If all goes according to plan, SkillCourt will offer online tutorials and other skill-building content to complement the real-time data and live action fun. Traustason was part of the huge Florida International University tent at one end of the Faire, which also showcased many other technologies and projects.





David Rifkind
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Jose Muguira and other Miami Dade College honor students pulled an all-nighter — building the MDC Culinary Institute with Legos. That's because the students were involved in Miami Dade College's Lego 305 exhibit and the big shipment of construction material — the Legos — didn't arrive from Denmark until about 6 p.m. Friday night. Throughout the weekend, the MDC master builders will be at work constructing other MDC buildings as the start of what will later be used in a virtual Magic City, and Faire goers can watch the project going up. Families, don't worry, there is a big Lego play area, too — which attracted as many adults as kids.

Everything about the Maker Faire is about being hands-on and getting to know the creators. Many got a taste, quite literally, of Miami's growing culinary innovation ecosystem. With so many exhibitors competing for attention, some held contests and giveaways to attract people to their booths. Mario Cruz promised selfies with a storm trooper at his booth featuring retro games.



Mario Cruz
@mariocruz

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Artisans let fairgoers try their hand at weaving at the FabTextiles exhibit that originated in Barcelona, while others fingered a display of fabrics, some laser cut or laser engraved, some made from bioplastics and others from sustainable "leather" made from kombucha tea. The FabLab, a global network of makers, brought in 20 makers from the Americas and Spain.

Like the maker movement in South Florida, Miami's Maker Faire, co-produced by MDC and the nonprofit maker organization MANO, has been growing every year. It began as a Mini Maker Faire in 2013 with a few dozen exhibitors and about 1,700 attendees at The LAB Miami in Wynwood, continued there and doubled attendance in 2014, and last year the two-day event grew to 120 makers and moved to YoungArts.

This year, the event shed the "Mini," growing to 150-plus makers and more than 5,000 attendees and becoming one of just 30 Maker Faires around the world this year. The Great Miami Makeathon and other activities took place in the run-up to this event.

The Faire continues Sunday with all the exhibits, plus StarBot will be back for a second day of fun with robotics, but this time its BattleBots will be in the ring. Maker talks will include MIT Professor Sertac Karaman on self-driving car technology, another on making chocolate sustainably, and a masterclass with DJ Kid Koala. Something for everyone.

Nancy Dahlberg: @ndahlberg

IF YOU GO

What: The Maker Faire Miami at MDC continues Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Where: MDC Wolfson Campus, Kyriakides Plaza, 300 NE Second Ave., Miami

Cost: General admission is \$15. Free for kids 5 and under and MDC students, faculty and staff.

More info: <http://miami.makerfaire.com>

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