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NWA Fencing Foundation wins More Than A Review contest NWAFF earns \$1,000 prize for writing 475 book reviews

BENTONVILLE—The competitive spirit inspired a Northwest Arkansas group of young fencing athletes to win a different kind of contest. Northwest Arkansas Fencing Foundation won MoreThanAReview.com's first ever book review challenge.

Qualifying non-profit organizations could win the \$1,000 prize by having the most book reviews added to the MTAR site on the non-profit's behalf. Northwest Arkansas Fencing Foundation earned the prize with 475 reviews that were entered by players, parents, staff and friends of the organization. There were more than 1,000 reviews total entered during the three-week competition.

"I'm very happy with the competition," said Donna Feyen, founder of MTAR. "There were a good number of reviews and they were of good quality."

MoreThanAReview.com is an unique book review site in that it provides:

- A platform for books to be **reviewed** by overall content and by four specific content categories (violence, language, sexual content and drug/alcohol use);
- The ability to **search** for books based on specific content levels and by genre; and
- Book **recommendations** based on the reader's preferred comfort level with certain types of content.

The MTAR was a good fit for the NWAFF in several ways. For example, many of the parents and staff are avid readers.

"I'm a big reader and it was an easy for me, very natural," said Bethany Culpepper, who is both a parent of two boys who take fencing lessons and a NWAFF board member.

Rick Kirk, another board member, had the most book reviews of the NWAFF group with 188 reviews. For the last three years Kirk has challenged himself to read a book a week and he used many of those books to review for the site, he said.

The NWAFF is also intent on making sure the athletes are good students by offering study rooms at the organization's center and requiring a minimum grade-point average.

"It can be used as a path to college," said Laura Kirk, NWAFF executive director. "There are better chances to get fencing scholarships than (other sports). We're trying to create life-changing opportunities for young people."

The \$1,000 prize will be used to help fund the organization's various programs, Laura Kirk said. It costs approximately \$1,000 to buy equipment and other expenses per athlete for a year. Fencing is one of the few sports that is available the entire year, she added.

NWAFF was founded in 2010 and opened its existing facility on 14th Street in Bentonville in October 2011. It has served more than 1,000 athletes through its various programs and hopes to have a wheelchair fencing program established soon.

Culpepper said her sons love the sport and she likes that it gives them the opportunity to work with other students of all ages. It also teaches strong character development.

"It's a sport of honor and tradition," she said. "There's a lot of good going on."