

jaclyn o'hara



With a gun in hand, senior Jaclyn O'Hara cosplays as D.Va from "Overwatch." "I started watching anime in 2016 and I never knew that you could actually cosplay the characters," O'Hara said. "In 2017 I started cosplaying and investing in looking like anime characters for a hobby, and now job." submitted photo

senior Jaclyn O'Hara turns her passion for cosplay and anime into a mechanism to make money and meet people

Applying thick black eyeliner, senior Jaclyn O'Hara puts the finishing touches on her cosplay look of Bakugo from the anime "My Hero Academia." Jaclyn started cosplaying anime characters in 2017, and she utilized the social media app TikTok to grow her platform.

Originally a hobby, Jaclyn became so popular she began to make money off her passion.

"It's like a second job. Many companies have reached out to me to collaborate giving me my own personal discount code for others to use," Jaclyn said. "I get paid sponsorships every time I showcase their products on my Instagram page and TikTok."

Jaclyn's father, John O'Hara, appreciated the professional benefits Jaclyn received from cosplay.

"This has helped her become well-rounded personally and professionally," John said. "She took her interest and turned it into a brand that companies worldwide have taken notice of and she developed her own formula for success."

While Jaclyn made money off it, cosplaying also

required a lot of money.

"I have a separate budget with cosplay; it can get very expensive when cosplaying. Cosplays alone bought or made can range from \$100 to \$400 depending on the character you're cosplaying," Jaclyn said. "Wigs also are another expense that can be pretty pricey. Colored contacts cost around \$30. If the character has props, that can also be a big expense. I have had friends that have gone broke from not saving for their cosplay."

John took note of the life lessons and skills Jaclyn learned from cosplay.

"When Jaclyn first started cosplay, I thought it was a healthy way for her to explore her imagination. Over the years, cosplay has become a positive and wholesome way to express herself creatively," John said. "As she has gained a large following, her self-confidence has grown and she learned the very important skill of how to deal with the attention she gets from being a popular figure in the cosplay community."

While it may seem like a niche hobby, Jaclyn made many friends from cosplaying.

"Once I started cosplaying, I started to notice that there were people that liked cosplaying in Kansas. The community is getting bigger every year and people are now confident enough to cosplay since there are people around them that cosplay," Jaclyn said. "We go and cosplay at places like the Legends and Oak Park Mall. We get a lot of stares that are good and bad."

When around her cosplay friends, Jaclyn preferred to be called by the name Lemon.

"Each cosplayer has a cosplay name. My cosplay name is Lemon," Jaclyn said. "My cosplay friends only call me that and I only call them by their cosplay names. I chose Lemon because I am literally addicted to them."

Looking forward, Jaclyn planned on a long career for her hobby turned job opportunity.

"I plan on cosplaying many characters in the future, as many different animes are coming out soon. I will continue collabs and continue to get better at cosplaying," Jaclyn said. "Even with a career, I will find a way to fit in cosplaying as a side job."

by Grace McLeod