

Godfrey man wins \$5k in St. Louis Ballpark Village Costume Contest

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ALTON - The 2016 movie *Moana* means a lot to Godfrey resident Tyrone Stevenson - specifically the character Maui, a demigod in the animated film portrayed by Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson.

In an interview with Riverbender.com Monday, Stevenson said his story shared a lot in common with the fictional character. He said when the character Maui described his parents abandoning him, he felt something incredibly deep. Stevenson said his own mother battled addiction and has only met her three times since his birth. He does not know who his father is, and neither does she.

"His story is mine, and that is why I chose to go through sharing that symbolic tattoo with him," Stevenson said, displaying an actual tattoo he got in honor of the film, which shows a woman casting a baby to the sea.

But, Stevenson went beyond a tattoo to display his love and kinship with the character. He purchased a bodysuit the color of his skin, and worked with his friends to mimic every single tattoo seen on the film's supporting protagonist. He also used a wooden instrument and paper mache to create a large hook carried by Maui in the film.



That dedication, and some pressuring from his friends, pushed Stevenson into entering a costume contest at St. Louis's Ballpark Village. Among thousands of contestants, Stevenson received the first place prize, which came with a check for \$5,000.

"I was being hounded by my friends, mainly Josh Dunse, who was there to record the video of me winning," he said via Facebook Messenger. "I originally wasn't going to do it, but after I watched the movie and saw how similar I was to the character, not just in appearance, but background story, I caved and started working on the costume. The biggest point that got me was Maui telling his story about his parents abandoning him."

Stevenson said he was going to use the money to finish paying debts he incurred after being laid off from U.S. Steel, but said he has since accepted a new position elsewhere,

and is hoping to use at least some of the money to go to Las Vegas to see his friend Alex Robinson and go to an anime convention there.

Besides his friends, Stevenson's significant other, Zoe Patterson has gotten involved in the act. Sometimes, she portrays the film's protagonist Moana while Stevenson portrays Maui. The couple has done this at several events, including a family party for an automotive dealership in Missouri.



While it is officially award-winning, Stevenson said he is working on creating a second suit, because the original markings, which were done with Sharpie markers, is starting to smear from "all the sweat." The next suit will be painted instead, which may last longer, but is taking longer than the Sharpie, Stevenson said.

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