

Still under Potter's spell

Bewitched but not bewildered, readers mark a publishing event with their own festivities.

By Elizabeth Fox
FOR THE INQUIRER

Christina Yost can hardly contain herself. "I'm excited to see how this all ends," says the 18-year-old from Glendora, Camden County. "I think it's going to answer a lot of questions. I'm really excited to see why everything happened."

What is it that has gotten Yost on the edge of her seat?

You guessed it — Harry Potter.

There's something about Harry. It's hard to fathom, but the boy is more loved than Mother Teresa and the Muppets combined. The real magic of this series is not what Harry does with his wand, but how author J.K. Rowling flourishes her pen and sends the whole world flying toward him like a witch on a broom.

"You're just drawn into that world and you can't get out of it until you know everything," explains Yost, who discovered the books in fourth grade and has re-read each several times.

"It's been with me for so long," adds Alexandra Levitt, 18, of Ambler. "You become emotionally invested in it and pretty connected to the characters. The vividness of the world that Rowling creates almost makes you wish it were real."

So as *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, the last book of Rowling's legendary series, is released tonight, it seems only right to send humanity's favor-

philly.com

For more coverage of the Harry Potter books and films, go to www.philly.com/harry

ite boy wizard off with a bang. For many, that means parties at chain and independent bookstores, where fans, often in costume, can gather together to count down the minutes until midnight.

"There's something very special about the idea of everyone across America getting the book at the same time," says Sarah Todd, assistant manager of Children's Book World in Haverford.

Some, though, are looking for grander, more extravagant affairs, a way to send Harry out in style.

"To find other people and share knowledge and activities and events is something almost magical," explains Andrea Barrish, head girl of Philadelphia's own Harry Potter meet-up group, Potterdelphia.

It's for these fans that the big Events, the ones with a capital E, were created. They include such extravaganzas as Potterdelphia and An Evening in Diagon Alley. Potterdelphia, in Lambertville, N.J., includes a life-size version of Harry Potter's world, allowing visitors to stroll through Diagon Alley, get

See **HARRY POTTER** on W23

■ A full list of Harry Potter parties, readings and other activities appears on Page 22.



SHARON GEKOSKI-KIMMEL / Inquirer Staff Photographer
Scenic artist Sean Mount puts the finishing touches on a life-size version of the magical Diagon Alley.



Sara Scully (left) and Brad Sanford working on the Diagon Alley replica, which will be featured in the PotterPalooza festival tonight at the Lambertville Public Library.