

Evil in the Air

Fraternities fight hunger with fear

photo illustrations
 by Dave House

Zeta Psi Haunted Mansion finds terror in cracks and crevices of historic home in Bryan

By April Towery
 The Battalion

Five peoples' deaths have given Will Benson a reason to look over his shoulder in the Zeta Psi Haunted Mansion.

"Now that the construction for the haunted house is underway, I won't walk through it at night by myself," he said. Benson, philanthropy chair of the Original Haunted Mansion and a senior political science major, said even he is afraid of the house, which becomes open to the community tomorrow at 8 p.m.

"We have a haunted closet in one of the upstairs bedrooms," he said. "We always hear rustling around in there and stuff gets moved around. A door will open when there's no one near it."

Tim Culpepper, a senior English major, said he has seen a silhouette of a woman rocking in the window.

"It gives me the creeps," he said. "It's definitely a PG-13 haunted house."

The mansion, erected in 1876 and located at the end of West 29th on Congress Street in Bryan, offers plenty of unusual sights, even in the daytime. Curtis Smith, a Bryan High student might be playing football with a bloody head in the front yard. A neighbor, Jesse, might be sitting on his front porch wearing a goblin mask and waving to anyone who passes by.

Last year was the first year for the haunted house, but James Yarbrough, a senior computer science major, said the fraternity brothers were pleased with the outcome.

"It's just fun to have all the brothers working together," Yarbrough said. "Working it, seeing people's reactions, is a blast."

"We try to give the customers something weird, something that will surprise and shock them. We're trying to take it a step higher this year. Last year was a learning experience. This house belonged to the first mayor of Bryan and is supposed to be haunted, so that adds to the mystique."

The customers are led through the house by a tour guide in groups of five. The haunted house will be open from October 25 through Halloween night.

Yarbrough said that 500 customers participated in the haunted house on Halloween night, and some of the kids enjoyed it so much they came through three or four times. Benson has higher expectations for this year and said he plans to take the haunted house as far as it will go.

"You know how when you're waiting on popcorn in the microwave and the microwave has stopped but the popcorn is still popping?" he said. "That's how we are. We won't stop until the popcorn stops popping. We expect to have 10,000 people at minimum on Halloween night and to donate a sizable amount of money and canned goods to the community."

The haunted house will benefit the Boys and Girls Club



THE ZETA PSI HAUNTED MANSION AT THE DEAD END OF CONGRESS AND W. 29th STREET, OPENS TOMORROW NIGHT.

of Bryan, the Brazos Food Bank, Bryan High School and other local charities yet to be named. The Spanish Club of Bryan High and students from A&M Consolidated have helped in setting up and constructing props.

Zeta Psi president and senior psychology major Brian McCormick said that donating to the charities is the primary reason for the event.

"Last year we got a quarter-ton truck full of canned goods," he said. "We reimburse ourselves for the money spent on construction and supplies, and we give the rest to the charities."

Last year the haunted house benefited the March of Dimes, but this year McCormick said they intend to "keep it local."

Currently assisted in sponsorship by Delta Delta

Delta and Kappa Alpha Theta sororities, McCormick said he hopes to eventually incorporate every sorority on campus.

"It's not just our house," he said. "We're trying to turn this into an all Greek philanthropy project. It's the single most unifying experience we have as a fraternity."

Culpepper said the Zeta Psi brothers do not see the haunted houses as a competition between fraternities.

"We're encouraging everyone to go to the competitors' houses, too, because we're all doing so much for the community," he said.

Benson said that he welcomes the community to enjoy the holiday at the haunted mansion.

"We're proud to open the doors of this mansion to the community once again to benefit many needy charities."

Kappa Sigma fraternity uses natural setting to terrify customers in the Wicked Woods

By JAMES FRANCIS
 THE BATTALION

Don't cry out. Don't move. Don't even breathe. Behind that bush hides a madman, waiting to stalk you with his ax.

You foolishly begin to walk slowly toward the moonlight and the snap of fallen twigs crackles at your heels.

In an attempt to see who is following you turn to see the face of a hideous monster.

If you think that scenario is scary, the brothers of Kappa Sigma Fraternity have more in store for those who choose to enter. The Wicked Woods, located on Highway 60, across from Easterwood Airport.

The Woods will be open to the public this Friday through Saturday and next Wednesday through Thursday (Halloween Day). The admission cost includes seeing a band play and riding a shuttle bus from the Barracuda Bar.

David Hakimi, chairman for The Wicked Woods and a senior political science major, said he has been working on the projects all year.

"It took our pledges probably about three months to create the landscaping," he said.

Hakimi said he studied magazines and went to other haunted houses to construct ideas of his own — even the Halloween masks Kappa Sigma will be using have been custom-ordered through a company in California.

"It's gonna be the most realistic thing you'll see in town," he said.

A trail about one-fourth of a mile long extends into the woods. Along the way, spectators will see Halloween frights sure to send chills down the spine.

Hakimi said people pay because they want to be scared.

"Everybody's got a little bit of a morbid side to them," he said. "It makes everybody feel kinda like a kid again." John Kinsey, a Kappa Sigma fraternity member and a junior management major, said he agrees with Hakimi.

"Getting startled makes you feel more alive," he said. "You think you're in danger, but you're really not."

Even with the goal of scaring customers, there is no intention to physically or mentally damage anyone, Hakimi said.

"We'd like to make sure everyone has a good, safe time," he said. Alex Heartfield, Kappa Sigma chapter

president and a junior agricultural economics major, said in the process of making sure people have an enjoyable experience, an even better cause is at hand.

"We're collecting non-perishable food items for the Brazos Valley Food Pantry," he said.

The Wicked Woods, as a whole, contributes to both the community and the fraternity, Hakimi said.

"It's a fund-raiser," he said. "I saw it as a good way to boost our philanthropy effort."

The money raised from The Wicked Woods will be put into use for the fraternity's next philanthropy venture to help Sheltering Arms.

The Wicked Woods is worth the money and time, since it is for a good cause, Heartfield said.

"When [visitors] come out at the end their hearts are gonna be pumping," he said. "It ends with a bang."

Adam Hughes, Kappa Sigma fraternity member and junior international studies major, said the ending is only one part of the total experience.

"Our Woods are scary," he said. "If you walk through there at night without a light, you'd be scared."

Hughes said The Wicked Woods is more frightening than regular haunted houses, because of its location.

"It's outdoors," he said. "People are a lot more afraid in the woods than they would be in a building."

Just waiting to get into the woods may be enough to scare some people, Kinsey said.

"When you're standing there waiting to go in you're apprehensive," he said. "When



WERE WOLVES HAUNT THE WICKED WOODS.

you come out, you know you've got your money's worth."

Although he said he cannot give anything away about the Woods, Kinsey offers a warning to the general public.

"Beware of the clowns," he said. "There's nothing scarier than a psycho clown, and that's the truth. We take pride in our work."

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