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BY AMANDA CREASEY ON OCTOBER 22, 2019

ENTERTAINMENT

Horne with one of his three cats.

Horne and his hearse.

By day, Tim Horne works as a mechanic. But when he's not at work, he's brewing up something spooky for neighbors near and far.

Many people who vacation in August do so at the beach, but not Horne. Beginning on Aug. 1 each year, he takes off one day a week until Oct. 22, his birthday. He uses these days off to prepare his property for Halloween.

From Oct. 22 through Nov. 5, Horne takes a full-time break from his day job to devote his time and energy to preparing for and cleaning up after his favorite holiday.

To celebrate, his free haunted house is located at 3004 Pineland Ave. on the corner of Harrowgate Road. This year, people looking for a good old-fashioned scare can find it from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m., on Saturday, Oct. 26 and Thursday, Oct. 31.

The tradition started at his parents' house in Colonial Heights, Horne said. "When my parents moved, I started at my house; been doing it for over 20 years."

Horne does most of the setup and cleanup himself, but his brother helps me and a friend helps take it all down. Horne's parents helped for years.

One challenge he faces each year is finding enough help, not only for preparation and cleanup, but also for scaring eager thrill-seekers.

Despite the amount of work that goes into his haunted house, Horne says the experience is rewarding. He enjoys "seeing everybody having fun and the amazement in their eyes," as well as hearing "all the compliments from people."

He finds many of his decorations from Spencer's and Spirit Halloween, but "a lot are made by me," he said, including the tall steel gate at the entrance, which features a repurposed tugboat chain.

Horne also built a larger-than-life Red Monster that greets visitors at the garage. "The last couple years people have donated items," he said. "People move and don't have anywhere to set their decorations up." He gladly puts these decorations to use, but his favorites, he said, are "probably the homemade items."

According to Horne, people who visit the free haunted house this year can expect "a lot to look at." Every year, "people will walk through over and over and still see things they missed the first time. They also can expect to be scared if they are brave enough to go through the 'Scare Tent.'"

The experience consists of several areas, including a glowing pumpkin patch complete with two real hearses, a darkened cemetery, a pet cemetery, a large garage full of seasonal terrors – including supernatural beings playing a real 19-century organ and the infamous "Scare Tent."

This darkened maze featuring startles and screams is not for the faint of heart. "Some people," Horne said, "are too scared to go in the 'Scare Tent.' They hear everyone else screaming."

Whether for the spectacle or the scare, "a lot of people tell me they come every year – they never miss it. One gentleman brings a trailer full of kids from his neighborhood every year."

Horne estimates that he and his volunteers terrify around 1,000 people each year. Will you be one of them?

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ABOUT AUTHOR

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