

Haunt in the Park generates over 4,000 lbs of non-perishables

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The spooky guests and creatures that bring terror to the Town of Shelburne every October have bid their farewell for another year, but their departure has left behind a little help for the community.

The Little Family announced on Monday (Nov. 11) that they raised more than \$2,500 and collected a total of 4,130 pounds of food for the Shelburne Food Bank from this year's Haunt in the Park.

"This has certainly made all these past few weeks of work, worthwhile," said Carola Little, an organizer for the annual event. "We know it's just a drop in the bucket to what the food bank really needs, but we hope that it helps them get through until closer to Christmas."

The Halloween-themed attraction returned to the community for three nights of screams and scares on Oct. 25, Oct. 26 and Halloween Night (Oct. 31). The event saw a historic number of attendees with more than 4,800 visitors.

"We are absolutely floored as to how many people came out. For the first time ever in our history, we had to close the gates to ensure that we could get everybody through," said Little. "The turnout was far more than we expected and now that we have had this massive of a response, we're going to put things in place for next year so that we can ensure that everybody gets a chance to go through the haunt in some form."

The Haunt in the Park event originally began in 1993 when Bob and Sue Little and their three then-teenage children set up a haunted house on the porch of their First Avenue home. As the family moved homes over the years, the event moved with them until they found its current home at Fiddle Park in 2015.

Last year, the Little family celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Halloween attraction.

Building the Halloween-themed attraction takes around four weeks and roughly 1,000 hours of labour from the family members and volunteers. On the nights of the haunts, more than 60 volunteers, consisting of family, neighbours, students and community members, dress up in characters to bring out screams and laughter for the community.

"What started out as being a family run event has now really expanded to include so many different people; it's become a sort of passing of the torch," said Little. "We will continue to push it and drive it to become bigger and better as much as we absolutely can. We're so grateful that other people have stepped up to help make this [happen] and continue to do this event for everybody."

Speaking with the Free Press, Little touched on why she believes the annual Halloween event has garnered growing attention from volunteers and visitors over the years.

"It isn't necessarily because it's a Halloween event, I think it's because of the way this event is put together by so many different facets of the community," said Little.

"It really is one of those old genuine community events. It's not a professional thing, it's not someone getting paid to be there; it's people giving up their time and love for putting something together as an even for other people to enjoy. It's from that, that something really incredible has blossomed."