

Haunt in the Park to feature fresh scares at Fiddle Park



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It's that creepy-crawly time of year again when Fiddle Park in Shelburne transforms to host spooky guests and creatures at the annual Haunt in the Park.

Hosted by the Little family, the Halloween-themed attraction will return to the community for three nights to give screams and scares on Oct. 25 and Oct. 26 from 7 p.m. to 1 p.m. and Halloween night (Oct. 31) from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

"At a time when people are struggling to keep traditions alive, we love the fact that the community gives us such a great response each year so we can continue with the same enthusiasm," said Carola Little, one of the event's organizers. "We love the fact that everyone is so supportive in what has become a really big tradition for us."

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, which saw a historic number of attendees at

the event with over 3,000 visitors.

As they enter a new decade for Haunt in the Park, the Little family is continuing to look for new ways to refresh it by changing the layout and adding new sections. The latest addition to the attraction was the Little Luck Mining Company in 2023, which joined the existing areas that included the butcher shop, swamp, Old English Street, and corn maze.

This year, the goal of the Haunt in the Park layout is to meld the different sections in a way that creates a ?fully immersive experience?.

?You will very much feel like you are being transported into another town,? said Little.

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.

?When you see it on the event night, where people are lined up, they're looking forward to the Haunt, they're laughing or reminiscing about a scare on the way back to their car; it makes it all worthwhile,? said Little. ?That feeling is what we strive for. You made it a moment for everyone to remember until the next year.?

With three decades of creating scares and three generations of volunteers, Haunt in the Park has grown into the festival-fabric of the community.

?Volunteering isn't just how you give back to a community, it's how you create one. We all live here in Shelburne because we're looking for that community and small-town feel. Taking part in events like this is how we establish and keep that feeling; where we recognize each other, support each other, and can enjoy some good memories together,? said Little.

As they do each year, the Haunt in the Park will be collecting donations for the Shelburne Food Bank, Shepherd's Cupboard. The event accepts non-perishable food items, cash donations and electronic donations for those who don't carry physical money.

Last year, the Little family was able to raise 2,200 pounds of food and \$2,500 to donate to the Shelburne Food Bank.

?We sincerely hope to break that record this year, especially with the food banks struggling everywhere, we want to make sure we can do as much as we possibly can,? said Little.

The Haunt in the Park will also be hosting two events for local youth: a Mini-Boo from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Oct. 26 and a dance party at Centre Dufferin Recreation Complex (CDRC) on Oct. 25 from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. for ages 7 to 13. Tickets for the dance cost \$15 and can be purchased at www.partyrockers.ca.