

Amber Arnett-Bequeaith, Full Moon Productions

Full Moon Productions' haunted houses are among the most successful in the country, drawing more than 100,000 people every fall to Kansas City's West Bottoms. But the family-owned company faced a challenge that's familiar to many seasonal businesses. The Edge of Hell, The Beast and Full Moon's other attractions are open for only about two months each year.

"Kansas City has incredible entertainment in the fall, and we're just one," said Amber Arnett-Bequeaith, Full Moon's vice president. "So you're really trying to compete for that entertainment dollar."

As a way to generate revenue during the other 10 months, Full Moon launched two other ventures that draw on its expertise in putting on a good, spooky show.

The Ghosts & Gangsters Tour takes passengers on a bus tour past the sites of the Union Station Massacre, the River Quay mob wars and other notorious episodes in local history. The tour runs several months of the year, with allowances made for weather. (During this summer's heat wave, for example, the tours were temporarily postponed.)

Ever seen Ghost Hunters or Ghost Lab, two reality TV shows where paranormal specialists try to document evidence of paranormal activity? Full Moon started its own version, "Ghost Hunts," which invites guests to conduct investigations of their own at one of Full Moon's properties.

About 350 people work for one of Full Moon's attractions during the fall season. The new ventures help keep some of them engaged the rest of the year. And it doesn't hurt that those folks tend to be great storytellers and entertainers, skills that translate well to the hunts and tours.

"It's a way to utilize our love and passion," said Arnett-Bequeaith, who has been in the haunted attraction business since she was 5.

Arnett-Bequeaith, who studied urban redevelopment at Drake University, is a tireless advocate for making the West Bottoms a better place to live and work. She has helped lobby for improvements to lighting, signage and infrastructure. Full Moon and other businesses have put up their own money for weed control and extra security.

As a result, she said, the area continues to show new signs of life.

"It's not been all in a day or all in a weekend," Arnett-Bequeaith said. "It's been years in the making."

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