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Full Moon Rising

By: Savannah Bequeaith, 15, Blue Valley High School

The best part," Amber Arnett - Bequeaith says, "Is the energy of the crowd, the traditions of the season and the memories we create for all that attend." Yet running four haunted houses is no easy feat, a fact that Bequeaith knows well. She is the Vice President of Full Moon Productions, the company that owns and operates The Beast, The Edge of Hell, The Chambers of Edgar Allan Poe and Macabre Cinema. Haunted houses are a unique blend of the arts, but Full Moon Productions also implements lots of sophisticated technology in their scenes, making your experience to their haunted houses that much more special, not to mention scary. The Beast and The Edge of Hell open early in September each year. The Chambers of Edgar Allan Poe and Macabre Cinema are the two nonprofit charity houses for The Dream Factory.

How did the idea of a haunted house start? My roots in the haunted house business began as a child growing up in a small town near Lake of the Ozarks, Mo. As part of a "creative" family, some of my earliest memories revolve around the theatre that my family produced in our small community. It was called "Summers Moonglo Theatre" complete with a 50-ft.-by-30-ft. stage, twin 25-ft. lighting towers, balconies suspended in large oak trees, a 40-ft. pond and a glittering gold curtain. The farm animals even became part of the show on a nightly basis. A few seasons later and \$50,000 in debt, the family decided to extend the season by offering a fall attraction in Kansas City. We had produced a small haunted house for our local high school and received "scary" reviews. Kansas City had the population base that the Ozarks was missing by being a seasonal destination, itself. In 1975, the original

Edge of Hell haunted house was created at 7th St. and Wyandotte Ave. When did you move to the West Bottoms? We moved to our current location in 1988. We created and opened The Beast in 1991. The Edge of Hell is celebrating its 35th Anniversary this season and we are proud to be a part of The West Bottoms community. The Chambers of Edgar Allen Poe and Macabre Cinema Haunted Houses opened their doors in 2007. Why did Full Moon Productions decide to partner with The Dream Factory? We have always been very community oriented and giving back is a vital part of who we are. Every year we give away hundreds of tickets to local school fund raisers and grant interviews to local and regional college students. We decided to take our charitable contributions to another level and The Dream Factory was a natural choice. For many local kids coming to our annual Dream Factory night is a dream within itself. They get to learn about behind the scenes, see make up demonstrations and meet the famous characters of these attractions. Now students (you must be 16 years or older) can volunteer for The Dream Factory Houses and earn community service hours. It's a great way to make dreams come true for these special kids in Kansas City.

What sets your haunted houses apart from the rest, Or what are the themes? The Edge of Hell has earned the reputation as one of the top haunted houses in the nation. The converted five-story warehouse has become known as the "granddaddy of all haunted houses." The house's numerous scenes are richly detailed with fright-inducing theatrics, scenery, scents and cast members, which includes one of the largest anacondas in North America. Experiencing a five story spiral slide is another trait that sets us apart. Our slide designs are patented and hand crafted. The Beast has become known throughout the country for its sheer size and attention to detail. Elements such as the werewolf forest (a 10,000-square-foot space) and the cobblestone streets of Jack the Ripper's London arise a sense of fear and vulnerability in visitors as they try to navigate their way through the house's open format. But don't forget to watch out for our "live" alligator! You can escape down a four story straight shoot outside the castle walls...if you find your way out. The Chambers of Edgar Allen Poe Haunted House brings his writings, tales and poems to life. This house is a great introduction to Poe and we offer school tours, as well. The Raven and The House of Usher are just a couple of favorites. The feelings of being buried alive or claustrophobia hold true for this house. It's all about taking people to a different dimension. We concentrate on the psychological aspect of scaring people as we try to discover what makes people feel the most vulnerable and scared. Macabre Cinema Haunted House is our nod to classic and contemporary horror movies. A haunted 1930's movie theater is the setting before you pass through a slit in the screen...that makes you SCREAM! You experience more than 25 sets and must determine what movie you are in. What we don't do is copy Hollywood's tactic of scaring people through gore. Everyone scares differently. Our job is to figure out what that means for you. Lights, Action, SCREAM! It's a lot of fun. Are they scary? Funny you should ask...that is the number one question we receive on a daily basis. Yes! They are scary! But despite the haunting nature of the houses, it's all in good fun. We create memories here. There are a lot of screams, but they are always followed by laughter. We recommend that 12 and under be accompanied by an adult. Then again, some 40 year olds don't make it through and if they do it may not be with dry pants. How many people do you hire? Our staff runs 15- 18 year round and during season we hire

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So, if you are unofficially Kansas City's First Lady of Halloween, what does that make your children? Well, all four of them are officially in ghoulish school. The tradition must live on and they love being involved. Scaring people is not as easy as it seems. It takes a lot of training and encompasses many different vocations. The business model doesn't make a lot of sense either - only being open 30 days. But it is a part of who we are and the passion flows in their veins, as well. Why do you think your birthday is in October?



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