

Once Upon a Boo-tiful October

Halloween is all about treats and tricks and things that go bump in the night. It's made of the stuff that causes sugar spikes and adrenaline rushes, spine-tingling and terror. And, if it's the latter you're looking for—a good old-fashioned fright-fest—a trip to Terror Trails will be something to put on your October to-do list.

The mastermind of the attraction, Gary Hughes, along with partners in mayhem Lance Nichols and Snookie Tinnerman, want you to be afraid ... very afraid. To that end, they have invented, and successfully run for the past 11 years, a technical wonder that ensures goose bumps and raised hair. Built on a little over a half mile of walking trails in Yantis, this make-believe massacre, in spite of its ghoulishness, has served to build a strong community spirit and is also home to one of the biggest fundraisers in the Lake Fork area.

Hughes says the idea for the attraction first came when he and Nichols, his business partner, were looking for a way to use some of the electronics and lighting expertise they had gained as owners of a high-tech stage lighting business. Halloween posed the perfect opportunity to integrate motion sensors, radio frequencies, robotics and stagecraft. Of the project, Hughes says, "It's the lighting that I inject into it that makes it interesting for me." And on the why of Halloween, he replies tongue-in-cheek, as if it should be obvious, "Because it uses so much less electricity than Christmas!"

A special element, and one of the most important parts of the project, is the "treat" component of Terror Trails that allows the business partners to give back to the community. From the onset, the Yantis Volunteer Fire Department (YVFD) has been an integral part of making this remote but highly attended attraction work.

In turn, the YVFD has also been a recipient of charitable donations, having been awarded over \$64,000 since the first year of Terror Trails. Other organizations that have received sizable checks include the Yantis Lions Club, The Salvation Army, the Northeast Texas Food Bank and the Winnsboro Friends of the Library.

Hughes, recounting the attraction's first year, said it drew only about 635 visitors the whole season. Despite that, they were able to donate \$2,500 to the YVFD. Now, over 6,000 people pay each season to get a scaredy-pants thrill, and Hughes says that it's been the trend that every night they are open, they break their own attendance record.

Hughes attributes much of the success to the "Boo Crew,"

made up of the actors who portray the goblins, demons and maniacal crazies who can't wait to scare the living daylights out of the guests. Even though there are mummies, a bat cave, a vortex of dizziness, coffins, tombstones, giant spiders and triggered technical special effects, Hughes says, "I don't think anything I have built out there is scary. It's the crew that makes it scary." And they do.

Pitch black is the night. A scritch-scratch-scratch-scratch sound, a blinding light and a highly enthusiastic chainsaw-wielding aberration make for a lively nightmare tableau.

Most of the ghouls that make up the Boo Crew are "repeat offenders" and hail from the locales of Alba, Mineola, Quitman, Winnsboro and Yantis. These approximately 40 seasonal employees show up each night the attraction is open, sign in on a roster and then wait for assignments or "castings" to be made, based on their seniority. Sometimes, way more than enough folks vie for the spots, and Hughes can't employ them all at each and every haunting. However, some stay anyway and do volunteer work just for the demonic fun of it.

Other volunteers materialize, too. The YVFD directs traffic and car parking while also enhancing safety. The Yantis Lions Club is there in full force, running the Glow Booth and selling fluorescent and electronic items that glow in the dark. There are blinking glasses, wristbands, necklaces and other manner of ornaments that help all of the best-dressed

Clowning around is a frightful business at Terror Trails, where the macabre will transform even the bravest hearts into wobbly-kneed screamers.



EVENING

thrill seekers set the tone for a trek down the trails. Or, as the advertisement says, “Buy them for your little brother so the monsters will get him first.”

After you have dared to walk the trails, and if you’ve not gotten enough of a frighteningly good time, there’s the added attraction of the House of Terror. The timid need not enter because it undoubtedly requires a stout heart to traverse those forbidding halls and eventually gain escape through the last door into the relative safety of the moonlit night.

Another side attraction, for those who have scared up a hunger pang, are the concessions. But they don’t have your average wilted hotdogs or soggy fries. The Transylvania Pizza Lab bakes up fresh, gourmet, handcrafted pizza in a hickory, wood-fired brick oven. The price is right at \$3 a slice, and diners can have it with their favorite cold drink and follow it with a bountiful assortment of candies.

So what does it take to build such a fantastically successful community event? Throughout the off-season (10 months that don’t include Halloween), Hughes, Nichols and Tinnerman, and a few others such as ranch hand Rimigio Nunez, work off and on to keep props fresh and make enhancements. And then during the entire month of Sep-

One of the chief masters of mayhem, Lance Nichols, remains busy through the Terror Trails season, serving as the chief ticket seller for a little bit of pretend bedlam that results in generous charitable giving.



On a gorgeous October day, Gary Hughes hangs out with a cheerful comrade on his jalopy. But beware! This skeletal apparition looks decidedly different when he suddenly appears along the heavily wooded and spook-infested Terror Trails.

tember, it’s many more hands and a full-time job to get the site ready.

“Every year,” Hughes says, “We add something new. This year, we did an electronic upgrade.” Also, he adds, “Much of the exhibit is permanent. That’s what gives us a leg up on the competition. It allows us to build some neat exhibits.”

Summing up this spooky enterprise, Hughes says, “It’s a self-sustaining hobby that has allowed me a creative outlet.” Most others would agree with that toned-down assessment.

For example, YVFD Chief Wesley Crist said, “The funds we get from them are critical. They go a long way in helping us secure needed equipment to protect the community. For example, we just now are trying to buy a tanker, which will haul more water to rural communities. Terror Trails is our largest annual fundraiser, and we could not do half of what we do without them.”

The trail is open every Friday and Saturday night in the month of October and on Halloween night. The ticket office opens at dark, and tickets are sold until midnight. To go on the trail, you need to be fit enough to walk (or run screaming) about half a mile. Those in wheelchairs can go through, but must be assisted by a Terror Trails hand. Cost to go through the trails is \$8 for adults and \$5 for those younger than 13. Those buying tickets to both the trails and the spooky house can get a combo ticket, which is \$14 for adults and \$8 for those younger than 13.

Terror Trails is served by Wood County Electric Cooperative. To visit the fright fest, go to Wood County Road 1960, just off Highway 154 in Yantis, near Lake Fork. Note that the trails are an outdoor adventure, so weather is a consideration for opening. For rainout or other information, call (903) 878-7501 or visit the website at www.terrortrails.com.

ENERGY AND EDUCATION *at the* **ANNUAL MEETING**



This year, the theme for the Wood County Electric (WCEC) Annual Meeting on October 9 is **“Energy and Education—Living Smart in East Texas.”** At WCEC, we believe it's important to help our members save on their electricity bills. And, conservation education is a great part of that. So, we've added a new element to this year's meeting. We've partnered with local businesses to allow them to showcase products or services that offer energy-conservation opportunities and benefits.

There will be a range of businesses on hand that market everything from high-tech solar systems to insulation, to the popular pellet stove. Additionally, we'll announce the results from the election of directors and other ballot items. Ballots and meeting registration cards were mailed in mid-September. Be sure to mail your ballot in a timely manner, because that's the only way to be entered into the drawing to win one of four \$250 electricity credits. Also, remember to retain the registration card and bring it to the meeting with you for a chance to win one of the door prizes generously donated by WCEC vendors.

In addition to the 2009 Annual Meeting, Energy and Education Expo and prize drawings, entertainment will be provided by the crowd-pleasing New Plainsmen.



SAVE THE DATE!

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2009

Governor Jim Hogg City Park
100 Governor Hogg Parkway, Quitman

AGENDA

- Energy & Education Expo Noon
- New Plainsmen 12:30-1:15 p.m.
- New Plainsmen 1:25-2 p.m.
- Exposition Closed 2-3 p.m.
- Business Meeting & Prize Drawings 2-3 p.m.
- Exposition Reopens 3-4 p.m.

Hazards from Generators Require Extra Caution

The death toll from carbon monoxide (CO) associated with generators has been steadily rising in recent years. In 2005, the last year for which the data is considered to be substantially complete, there were 94 deaths from generator-related CO poisoning. Many of the deaths occurred after hurricanes, ice storms or blizzards. While reporting of incidents for the subsequent years is still ongoing, there were 83 and 43 deaths in 2006 and 2007, respectively, reported to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) as of June 30, 2008.

Remember these facts about generators and carbon monoxide if you are going to use a generator:

- CO from a generator is deadly and can kill you in minutes. One generator produces as much CO as hundreds of cars. It can incapacitate

and kill consumers within minutes.

- NEVER use portable generators indoors or in garages, basements or sheds. They should always be used outside well away from windows, doors, vents or any other opening.

- Always have a working CO alarm in your house.

- Also, never use charcoal grills indoors, even with ventilation. Charcoal also quickly produces deadly CO.

In January 2007, CPSC required manufacturers to place a danger label on all new generators and the generators' packaging reminding users of the immediate danger carbon monoxide can pose.

Carbon monoxide is not the only danger associated with generators. Improperly hooking the generator to a home's wiring can cause an entirely different problem. In a major power outage, crews from your electric cooperative or other utilities will be working to restore power. If you have a generator hooked directly to the house wiring, it can cause a backfeed of electricity onto the lines. Workers who rely on the fact that the lines are "dead" have been injured or even killed by electricity from a distant generator.

Always plug appliances you want to power directly into the generator unless you have a double-pole, double-throw transfer switch that's been professionally installed by a licensed electrician.

Generators can be useful tools in a prolonged power outage. But used improperly, they can lead to death for you, your loved ones or the dedicated professionals who work for your co-op. Please be careful.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

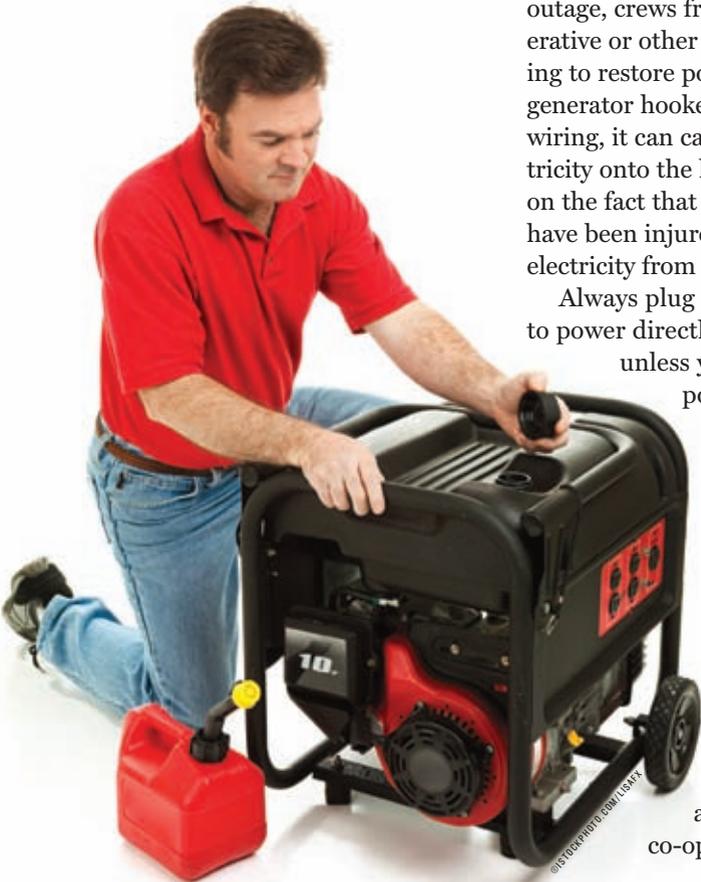
The Board of Directors of Wood County Electric Cooperative, Inc., will convene a public evidentiary hearing to take evidence from the admitted parties and receive public comment on whether the Board should implement the Integrated Resource Planning, Rate Design Modifications to Promote Energy Efficiency Investments, Smart Grid Information standards established by Congress on December 20, 2007, in the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act of 1978 (hereinafter, PURPA), 16 U.S.C. §§2601-2645, as amended by the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007.

That a hearing will be convened on:

DATE: October 19, 2009

TIME: 3 p.m.

LOCATION: Wood County Electric Cooperative, 501 S. Main St., Quitman, TX 75783



SAVE ENERGY ■ SAVE MONEY

Inefficient windows can account for up to 25 percent of a home's heating bill. To improve the energy efficiency of your windows, follow these simple steps:

- Repair damaged glazing.
- Install weatherstripping.
- Install insulating window shades.
- Replace old, inefficient windows with Energy Star-labeled windows with high-performance glass.