

Volunteers, Love of Fright Fuel Business of Haunting

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Every October for the past 13 years, Brad Finkle has been scaring people.

This year, however, Finkle's avocation is more than an elaborate free Halloween party in his backyard. His 1985 "Stone Castle of Terror" is a two-week project that he predicts will raise more than \$10,000 for the Omaha Community Playhouse.

Finkle, 22, who runs an Omaha building maintenance firm, is learning what some local fund-raisers have known for years — haunted houses are moneymakers.

This month, six of the largest Omaha-area haunted Halloween houses expect to take in more than \$150,000, with about \$90,000 of that going to various charities or causes.

"It's tremendously successful," said Scott Byrd, who builds the "Scream in

the Dark" exhibit to raise money for Campus Life, a youth religious organization. "That's why so many organizations are trying to do it."

The initial plan can be fairly simple: Rent a house, or park a half-dozen truck trailers next to each other in a parking lot. Build a plywood maze of twisting passageways. Leave room for costumed "monsters" to hide. Think up a name like "Stairway to Terror." Sign up volunteers to work. Charge from \$1 to \$3 admission and wait for the business.

But there are other details such as security guards, liability insurance, portable toilets, advertising — maybe even an alliance with a local radio station for promotions. And many operators look at haunted house design as an art form, not just a fund-raising gimmick.

But even a "plain-label house" built

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