

Dark nights to haunt spooky jail

There will be little light from the moon to light the way for mortals this Halloween season — no full moon.

Weird screams will drift from the Squirrel Cage Jail for the last nine days of October. The Council Bluffs Jaycees and the Historical Society of Pottawattamie County will be haunting the old jail at 226 Pearl St.

The ghouls put in their first appearance at 7 p.m. Friday and will continue through Oct. 31. Sunday through Thursday nights the haunted jail is open from 7 to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday nights the haunting will start at 7 and continue until 11 p.m.

The jail may be the only haunted house set up in the Council Bluffs for Halloween this year. Groups sponsoring a haunted house have to check with city health and fire departments before opening and no other groups have contacted the Council Bluffs departments.

This is the fifth year the jail has been haunted for Halloween. The Jaycees have haunted it for three of those five years. The Jaycees have had haunted houses in other places for many years.

TWO FLOORS of the jail, including 10 cells, have been fixed up to scare people, David DiBlasi, vice president of the Jaycees, said.

The Jaycees had to be careful when they were working on the jail, DiBlasi said. The jail is on the National Registry of Historical Places which means the building can't be changed or defaced in anyway, such as putting paint on the walls to make the place scarier.

Groups of six to 10 people will

be led through the jail at a time with a guide leading the group and someone following the group to make sure no one disappears.

Children from the Iowa School for the Deaf are going to go through the haunted jail Monday evening. DiBlasi said he expects a large group.

There will also be a concession stand outside but no food is allowed inside the haunted jail. The best time to get a snack may be while standing in line to get in. Afterwards, you may not feel too hungry.

Usual tours of the jail were stopped Oct. 10 so the Jaycees could begin decorating for its "unusual" tours.

Planning the haunted house took about a month, DiBlasi said. Setting up a haunted house is more complicated than just trying to scare people.

The city health department has to be contacted about the noise from the building. Scary sounds will be amplified and the health department had to be contacted to allow the noise variance.

Sandra Knop, Council Bluffs public health sanitarian, said the jail area is zoned for businesses and commercial activities so the noise limit is 65 decibels, day or night.

Since there are no people who live nearby who could be disturbed by noise from the haunted jail, Knop said she doesn't expect any problems. The health department won't be monitoring the noise level. If there are any complaints, though, the department will monitor the noise and if it exceeds 65 decibels, the sound will have to be turned down.

The haunted jail also had to be inspected by the fire mar-

shal to make sure it was safe. Several fire extinguishers have been donated to the Jaycees for use in the haunted jail. Workers have been instructed on how to use the extinguishers, DiBlasi said.

LIABILITY INSURANCE also had to be purchased. That added \$250 to the expenses of

setting up the haunted jail.

The concession stand for the haunted house had to be inspected by the health department. Plus, people from the Jaycees, the historical society and the JayceeEtties had to be organized to work selling tickets, at the concession stand, as guides and as monsters.

Expenses for the haunted house came to about \$2,500, DiBlasi said. The rubber masks the monsters wear cost from \$50 to \$70 each which adds to the costs. More elaborate haunted houses, such as one with a maze, can cost anywhere from \$3,500 to \$5,000.

Proceeds from the haunted

jail will go towards helping the Jaycees pay for their fireworks display on the Fourth of July and the historical society will use its share of the proceeds to help pay for the slate roof which was put on the jail as a part of its restoration. Both groups are non-profit organizations.



Monsters Are On The Loose... in Council Bluffs. The Jaycees and the Historical Society of Pottawattamie County are sponsoring a haunted house in the Squirrel Cage Jail, 226 Pearl St. Bill Roux

(left), 218 Wendover Drive, and David DiBlasi, 322 1/2 N. ... St. both Jaycees, are ready for the holiday. — Nonpareil photo by Steve Glowacki.