

Haunted Forest returns to Sheppard's Bush next Saturday with a slash of Hitchcock

Thrills and chills and a potential visit from Norman Bates will take over Sheppard's Bush next Saturday, October 28, as the Town of Aurora's Haunted Forest returns for Halloween Fun.

Taking place from 6 to 9 p.m. at both Sheppard's Bush and the Aurora Family Leisure Complex, where seasonal activities will be found throughout the building, the award-winning event offers something for everyone, including the faint of heart!

Our partners have come back with huge, spooktacular enthusiasm, including Marquee Theatrical Productions, the Knuth Family, and 5th Aurora Scouts, says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. We're very excited and this year we have our Youth Engagement Committee coming on board to help us, in addition to a minimum of 130 community volunteers. We're currently in the Bush working non-stop at it, getting cabins ready, getting the trails ready, planning the displays, as well as curating the activities that are going to take place at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex (AFLC).

Asked to provide a teaser on some of the spookiness to come, Ware and her team promise a Barbie-themed display that could very well be 'Enough' to get the blood pumping, the traditional ghosts and goblins, and, if you venture down the 'scary' trail, appearances by film-villains Michael Meyers, Freddy Kruger, Jason and, new this year, bloodcurdling salutes to Alfred Hitchcock's classic film, Psycho. Maybe it's best to shower ahead of time!

Our ghosts and goblins have been resting and vacationing over the last year and are ready to get up to their usual shenanigans as they join us on this adventure, says Ware on the family-friendly version of the two trails. We will have friendly witches, not-so-friendly witches, not-so-friendly lemonade stands, I Scream for Ice Cream.

Then we have our scary trail and it wouldn't be scary if we didn't have Michael Meyers, Freddy and Jason back. The Knuth family, which takes over the big scary cabin, have done an outstanding job. They worked all Thanksgiving weekend on it and will still be working the next two weeks on it, and that is certainly going to be an experience for those brave enough to trek out.

While the Haunted Forest has been a favourite community event for more than a decade, this is just the second year back in the forest since the global pandemic forced a pivot towards Aurora's Haunted Greenhouses, which transformed the conservatories at the Joint Operations Centre on Industrial Parkway North into a walk-through haunted house.

While patrons enjoyed the experience, they were thrilled to get back to the Bush last year and Ware and her team are keen to keep that momentum going.

Once again, we will have a combined family trail which will then split off to two trails - one for those not of the faint of heart, and the other continuing on with the family-rated displays, says Ware. We really want to encourage people to enjoy the activities at the AFLC and then hop on one of three shuttlebuses going back and forth between the Complex and the Bush where, once again, we will have bonfires, photo-ops, and we're very fortunate to have the Optimist Club of Aurora doing their charity barbecue and Caterina's Kitchen on hand with some bites and nibbles for people who have done their trail experience - unless they want to partake before.

This is for the community, created by the community and enjoyed by both the producers and the receivers of it, she says. We have so much fun working with the groups. We also have some dedicated Royal Bank employees from some of the area branches which are actually dedicating a night to make some packing tape sculptures which, in the past, have been so, so well-received.

We're very thankful for the volunteers who have stepped forward. We're excited to be able to get acquainted with the ghosts and goblins of Sheppard's Bush, and we're so excited to bring the community back to one of the most anticipated events of the year. Even if the weather seems a little bit unfavourable, that is perfect because inclement weather adds to the excitement of the event. It makes

it harder on us and the volunteers, but it does add to the experience of the patrons.?

Aurora's Haunted Forest is admission-by-wristband only and these can be purchased for \$5 per person (ages 2 and up) from the AFLC (135 Industrial Parkway North), Town Hall, and the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (1400 Wellington Street East). For more information, visit aurora.ca/hauntedforest.

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