



Closer Inspection



The attraction's two trails feature 13 scenes each, including a discarded Ferris wheel and a 24-foot-tall **chapel**, a wooden frame covered with fire-retardant foam panels that are painted to resemble stone.



The four-foot-tall foam **gargoyles** were made by Helton Bros., a set design and prop manufacturing company in Livonia, Mich., for the band Black Sabbath's 2007 "Heaven & Hell" tour.

Scare tactics

How a Maryland Halloween attraction spooks visitors

BY KRIS CORONADO

In 1993, Nick Markoff had no inkling he'd be celebrating the 20th year of Markoff's Haunted Forest in 2012. In fact, he didn't know if the spooky venture he had dreamed up with younger brothers Alex and Matt would make it another day.

"On our first night, only 24 people came," recalls Nick Markoff, 43. "That was after handing out fliers everywhere."

Today, the attraction — two quarter-mile trails through the woods of the Markoffs' outdoor adventure company, Calleva, in Dickerson in Montgomery County — draws an average of 25,000 visitors each October (*Markoffshauntedforest.com*, \$20-\$30, through Oct. 31).

Markoff says many haunted attractions depend on blood and gore for their scares. "We're more like the woody, dark and primal fear," he says.

Here, Paul Brubacher, the Haunted Forest's vice president of operations, offers a glimpse of how they're generating goose bumps this year.



Faux skeletons pressed into a **tree stump** are "supposed to look like they have been unearthed," Brubacher says. Elsewhere in the woods, a bone yard includes remains of Markoff farm animals collected over the years, he says.

Brubacher says the woods contain about 350 **skeletons**, which are transformed using such material as cotton soaked in latex, which, when dry, looks like skin, and dried glue to resemble sinew. "It takes time to get a really good one," he says.



A **goat head** sits on a track. "It can chase you. It can bite at you," says Kevin Alvey, owner of Indiana manufacturer Gore Galore, which has produced props for Six Flags theme parks and TV's "Law & Order: SVU."



This head and legs are part of a 12-foot-tall **wendigo** (based on a beast from Algonquian mythology), which is new to Markoff's this year. Four telephone poles sunk 4½ feet into the ground help keep the monster stable as it swoops down on visitors.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BENJAMIN C. TANENBERG