

Working the graveyard shift on the Hill



Rachel Brown tries to bury a reluctant corpse in the graveyard at Haunt on the Hill, a house on Old Forest Hill Rd., which once again was a prime destination on Halloween for kids seeking candy — and a scare. Photo by Sandie Benitah

Kids knew where to go for treats and tricks

'Martha Stewart of Forest Hill' behind 10th year of haunted house

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Each Halloween, trick-or-treaters in upper Forest Hill know just where to go if they want to get spooked.

Haunt on the Hill, a haunted house on Old Forest Hill Rd., has been a scream in the neighbourhood for the past 10 years thanks to the resident, who has been called "the Martha Stewart of Forest Hill."

But unlike that other Martha, the driving force behind the haunted house has never been to jail, nor is she known for acting like an occasional witch. Rachel Brown, 23, looks as innocent as pumpkin pie and acts just as sweet. However, kids know full well to expect more than just

HAUNTED Page 3

Haunted house began with a few decorations

Cont. from Page 1

treats at her house as she usually has a bag of tricks up her sleeve.

"In my cemetery I have a tombstone that bleeds from the letters using an aquarium pump," she said, estimating she gets "hundreds" of trick-or-treaters at her door each year. "With scary music, eerie lighting and so much more, my house is always a big hit with people of all ages."

All of her props are homemade, prompting the Martha moniker in her community. This year, she surprised revellers with Bubbles the Vicious six-foot-tall Spider with red, glowing eyes and a grim reaper that

moves on its own.

Once kids get beyond the cemetery in Brown's front lawn (that's if they're brave enough to make it), they'll enter the mad lab in her garage, fitted with a homemade electric chair, bubble potions and a jail cell with a skeleton still shackled to the bars with the words "I will return" written above in blood red.

"I started running my yard haunt as a way to escape the boredom of simply handing out candy," she explained on her website, haunton-thehill.com. "It started with just a few decorations I saw at the drug-store and has since evolved into a

major haunt with mainly homemade decorations which I start building months prior to Halloween."

This year, she started building her fright site in April.

Brown's Haunt on the Hill isn't the only popular haunted house in the area. Several other posh homes in the North Toronto and Forest Hill area are well known for putting on an annual Halloween spectacle. However, none of them can brag about being a winner of the Horrorfind Freaking Scary Site Platinum Award — a website honouring other scary online frights. Brown earned a permanent spot on the winner's list!