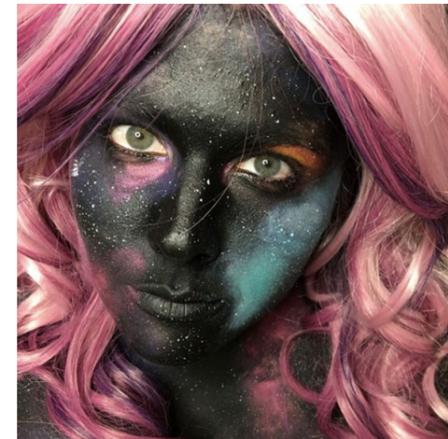




SIoux FALLS WOMAN  
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# Women in Haunting

By Sioux Falls Jaycees | Photos of Sierra Rae Photography

Halloween and Haunted Attractions have seen an explosion in popularity in the past few years. It's no surprise that the Sioux Falls area has multiple haunted attractions to enjoy each fall. This growth in haunted attractions has opened many doors for women whose love for Halloween goes above the average trick-or-treater's.

## A DIFFERENT APPROACH

Women often are introduced to a haunted house through a partner or family member. However, an increasing number are approaching haunting as an art.

Chelsea Kappenman, former chair of the Jaycees Feargrounds, found haunting when her high school theatre director brought them through the haunt for a cast party. It wasn't long before she found herself on the management committee. Current Feargrounds Makeup Manager Tamara Parliament had been doing Special Effects (SFX) makeup for years before deciding to apply her skills to haunting, and has since grown the program to include internships for aspiring makeup artists in the Sioux Empire.

## RE-DEFINING ROLES INTO LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The "sexy victim" women roles may still exist, but their days are numbered with women taking the lead in haunting.

"I have had customers tell me I won't be scary because I'm a woman," said Chrissi Casados, front-of-line actor and Design Manager at the Feargrounds. "I just wait until they enter the haunt, and then terrorize them!"

Out at the Riverview Pumpkin Festival's Haunted Trail, women participate in all roles, including ownership.

"So far, all of our trail guides have been women," said Shari Gannon, who owns Riverview Christmas Tree Farm with her husband, Todd. "Our female actors are just as successful at getting scares as the men. Many might use a more subtle, sneaky approach, while men take a more aggressive approach, but the end result is the perfect mix to scare our unsuspecting visitors."

While age and experience are important, it by no means limits women in haunted leadership roles.

"I went to the haunt as a senior in high school and asked for an application as soon as I was through," said Augustana University sophomore and Jaycees Feargrounds Co-Chair Dani Holm. "It can be a challenge balancing management with classes and homework, but it is worth it to be able to be able to be part of such a huge project, especially one that gives so much back to our community."

## MOTHERHOOD IN HAUNTING

Work-life balance is a constant struggle, and volunteering at a haunted attraction can add another layer to this battle.

"Both of my kids grew up in the haunt; scaring is a family activity for us," said Casados. "We have a very tight-knit haunt family who help make it possible, even for a single mother. People have stepped up to help with homework, to teach life skills. My kids learned that things in the dark don't have to be scary."

"Being a mom is my #1 priority, and I adore my kids, but it doesn't keep our family from getting out to volunteer," said Sally Damm, who works on the Safety and Medical team at the Feargrounds. "Being pregnant didn't hold me back either. When I was six months pregnant with my second, the office door locked without anyone inside, and I ended up climbing over the wall, belly and all, to get in and unlock it!"

## STRUGGLES & TRIUMPHS

Haunting doesn't come without struggles – some you might not think of – but the women involved find a way to persevere and thrive.

"I'm very proud to be a Christian, but I have faced criticism from

both sides — because I work at a haunt or because I like to listen to Christian music while working at the haunt," said Kappenman. "You can be a strong Christian woman and love Halloween and haunted houses! It's a great way to volunteer in the community, and I have met so many amazing people through my haunt family."

"Juggling family time can be difficult. I actually got involved so I could see my husband during haunt season," said Brittany Bittner, Volunteer and Back-of-House Manager at the Feargrounds. "Even when the going gets tough, it's the people that keep me coming back. I have made so many new friends and connections with like-minded people – it's amazing!"

"The best part of it for me is watching volunteers grow throughout the year," said Parliament. "We work with a lot of youth and young adults, and they continue to amaze me every year. I love watching people find their niche and really start to excel. They are learning life skills and the value of giving back. It might just be Halloween for some, but to us, we are investing in people and possibly, in future leaders in our community."

The Jaycees Feargrounds opens its scare season October 11. Learn more at [JayceesFeargrounds.com](http://JayceesFeargrounds.com). ■