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Tops in terror: Lee haunt gets national recognition

By RONI REINO

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Saturday, October 1, 2011

LEE — The Haunted Overload has sent shivers down peoples' spines with its towering scarecrows, chainsaw-wielding maniacs and fierce wolves, but now it's getting national recognition as one of the top attractions in the country.

The haunted attraction at Demeritt Hill Farm in Lee has doubled in size since last year, with owner Eric Lowther adding multiple sections including a spooky circus tent to terrify those afraid of clowns and rundown hillbilly shacks to remind visitors they shouldn't snoop in the woods.

This summer, he learned that the Haunted Overload was getting noticed across the country when he was approached by a production company that was showing off the top attractions in the country. Hearing his haunted attraction was still in the running after weeks on a dwindling list, he was excited people knew about the attraction.



EJ Hersom/Staff photographer Eric Lowther, owner of Haunted Overload, holds hands with part of a giant clown creation at his attraction in Lee Wednesday.

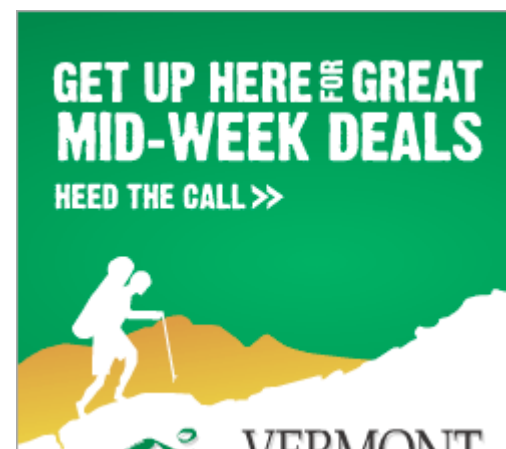
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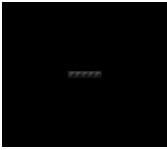
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"It's starting to pay off with national recognition," he said.



**EJ Hersom/Staff photographer
Eric Lowther, owner of
Haunted Overload, stands in
front of one his Halloween
creations at his attraction in
Lee Wednesday.**

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their fears.

On Sunday, Lowther and about 40 actors will be performing for a film crew to get footage for the show, which Lowther said is expected to be featured on The Weather Channel in the near future.

"I always loved Halloween. The imagery, the weather, the smell of the leaves. It's the best time of year to be outside," he said. "It gives that spooky feeling all on its own."

Ever since Lowther built a haunted house in his friend's basement at age 12, he has been trying to out do himself every year. His ideas are continuously flowing, planning out haunts three to four years in the future and now he has spread his ideas out in the woods along the farm aimed to pick at every fear he can imagine.

Now, instead of getting a scare out of unsuspecting trick-or-treaters, he can horrify those willing to test

Standing before a towering two-story, black and white circus tent, Lowther showed the beginnings of what would soon be a troupe of creepy clowns.



"I was never really into clowns, but people are freaked out by clowns, so I decided to go hog-wild," he said.

He said he hopes the dark walkways, eerie lighting and fog will add to the ambience and lead to shrieks from visitors. Scare lovers will run through abandoned shacks, past sky-high jack-o'-lantern people and through an abandoned mineshaft — all of which Lowther and his crew have created from scratch.

Last year, the Haunted Overload saw 5,000 people in six days. A busy stretch that Lowther hopes to see again this fall.

The attraction is only open for seven days, with tickets being sold online at www.hauntedoverload.com or at the store at the Demeritt Farm.

They are also offering varying levels of fear starting with Fright Night Lite where the attraction is open during the day without actors on Oct. 20 and Oct. 27 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Those wishing for a bigger scare can book on Oct. 21, 22, 23, 28, 29, 30 and 31.

With bones scattered along the walkways, demonic dolls lining the walls of a shack and the sound of chainsaws, Lowther hopes this will be a Halloween to remember.

"I want them to feel like they'll never get out," he said.



EJ Hersom/Staff photographer Eric Lowther, owner of Haunted Overload, walks through one of the many dark forts in his attraction in Lee Wednesday.

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EJ Hersom/Staff photographer Samantha Diamon holds a costume she uses to stalk guests at Haunted Overload in Lee Wednesday.

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