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Mike Holmes rescues a reno gone bad in Canmore
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What lurks next door

Calgarians put on a horror show for their neighbours

Something's strange in the air come late October. The wind howls, the leaves swirl in the nighttime streets and the dusk sky takes on a dramatically eerie tinge. People around Calgary have certainly gotten into the spirit of the spooky season this year by creeping out their homes with skeletons, spiderwebs, ghosts and graveyards to terrorize the trick or treaters. We asked readers to send us photos of their ghoulish homes and they delivered. Here are our four winners. Check out our photo gallery of all contest entries at calgaryherald.com

The home of Louise Cann, Mike Thran and son Jeffery Thran, 9, is devilishly bedecked for Halloween. The Highland Park residents have been creeping out their house for the past 14 years. Colleen De Neve, Calgary Herald



Colleen De Neve, Calgary Herald
Mike Thran, Louise Cann and son Jeffery are clearly in the Halloween spirit.



Christina Ryan, Calgary Herald



Courtesy, Steve Elliott



Ted Rhodes, Calgary Herald

ROB AND DAWN MOXLEY

What do you call someone who earns a treat at the Moxley house? A survivor. Rob and Dawn Moxley have used their Tunnel of Terror to scare the bejebers out of Silver Springs inhabitants since 2001. Set up in front of their house, the attraction is dark, it's spooky and, without giving away too many secrets, evil has been known to lurk in its shadowy depths. "We're kind of the community hot spot here," says Rob. "We get lots of strange looks, but most people love it. There's not too many who think I'm a twisted, sick person." The family's seven children enjoy the scary spectacle and Rob says Dawn has offered her support as well, "although she wishes I'd put equal effort into Christmas." The downside of producing all those creepy, crawly effects is you tend to attract hungry crowds. "The cost of candy alone is starting to get a little crazy," Rob admits. "But, having said that, some friends who don't get many kids at their places often drop their candy here. That helps us." Rob enjoys experiencing a good fright himself, a hair-raising thrill that dates back to childhood. "I was building dummies at an early age to have a good scare," he says. "I didn't have the things that kids have now, so my creative mind got away from me on occasion."

KARI AND STEVE ELLIOTT

Mention to Kari Elliott that she is sick and warped, and her retort is quick and to the point. "Thank you." This is the third year Kari and her husband Steve have presented the Braeside Cemetery and the plot thickens even as the plots multiply. "We keep adding more and more each year," Kari says. "This is probably the scariest that we've had it." There are more gravesites, more crows, more rotting femurs dangling from the vegetation, more neighbourhood kids warped for life. "It's fun," says Kari of the enthusiastic reaction to the boneyard. "Everybody who comes here says it's a really cool house and they come back every year." The couple's seven-year-old son helps with suggestions and Steve, a big fan of horror movies, picks up other weird and twisted ideas from his favourite DVDs. When he's not doing research from his perch on the couch, Steve is constructing the crosses that protrude from the suspiciously fresh looking mounds of dirt dotting the lawn. Neighbours, who may conduct a household head count each morning just to be on the safe side, appreciate the fact the Elliots are so keen. "They like the idea," Kari says. "If we're doing it, they don't have to."

JENIFER VAN MEENEN AND GRAHAM BADRY

Jenifer van Meenen figures she and partner Graham Badry are keeping the Halloween economy alive and well in Calgary. From a two-day witch-hunt among the city's Costco stores (they found her in the end) to the 10-plus jack-o'-lanterns to the Styrofoam tombstones carved with a Dremel tool, the couple are continuing a tradition they launched last year after moving to a new neighbourhood. "We hadn't had an opportunity to meet many of the neighbours or get involved with the community," she says. "This was an opportunity to kind of introduce ourselves. Halloween is the one day of the year when you expect to welcome strangers to your door, so we decided to make it fun for everyone. All of our friends came and we had a pot of chili on — people loved it." She credits Badry with the decorating vision and creativity, adding that he even built the fenced graveyard after dark, because "a real gravedigger would only be doing this at night." As for the neighbours, she notes that five or six houses near theirs are newly decorated this year, adding some friendly competition to the streetscape. "It's just created this wonderful environment," she says. "It's made us feel more a part of our neighbourhood and connected us to the people who live around us."

MIKE THRAN AND LOUISE CANN

Mike and Louise were determined to win the contest. Here's an excerpt from their contest submission: "Haunted House For Sale: This home comes with its own cemetery, although some upkeep may be needed to keep it pristine, and its own steeple and lighted spire. This home might be yours if you can agree to certain afterlife conditions of sale and the firm price of \$666,666.66." The pictures certainly lived up to the crafty e-mail billing. "I didn't care what we had to do, I wanted to win," said Louise. The pair have been freakishly festooning their 1913 bungalow for 15 years, but this year, says Louise, "we wanted to go all out." Louise stapled so many black bags all over the front of the house that she "blew a staple gun." Garish characters hang from ropes across the front porch and on the roof is a steeple. The neighbours really don't seem to mind: "They think it's pretty cool."

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■ Go to calgaryherald.com photo gallery for more contest entries

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Strathcona, \$469,000
#31, 39 Strathlea Common SW
Just listed, Executive townhouse, 2000+ sf, 3 bdrms + bonus room, hardwood, maple kitchen, granite topped island, butler's pantry, condo fee \$212/month.



Cougar Ridge, \$555,000
27 Cougarstone Court, SW
Just listed, 3 bdrm home, walk to Waldorf school, 2067 sf, great room & flex/dining room, island kitchen, maple cabinets, granite counters, south bldy.



Montreaux, \$619,000
Open House Saturday 2-4
98 St Moritz Terrace, SW, new home, 3 bdrms, 1920 sf, hardwood floors up & down, furniture-quality closet organizers thru-out, granite counters, stonework.



Sienna Park, \$698,000
418 Sienna Heights Hill, SW
Backing greenbelt, steps to school, 2259 sf + developed bsmt, curved staircase, 3+1 Bdrms & den, master w/ sitting Rm, exceptional basement just developed.



Elbow Valley, \$1,750,000
123 Elbow Ridge Bluffs
Just listed, 3061 sf bungalow + developed walkout, superior finishes & built-ins, perfect plan for entertaining, 6 fireplaces, 1+2 bdrms, oversized 4 car garage.