



## Unlucky 13 haunts design industry

With Halloween just a few days away, David DeChamps would really like to scare you. In fact, he has turned a lifelong passion for all things haunted into a [business](#).

At a recent SCORE counseling session where DeChamps was fine-tuning business details, he related the story behind Unlucky 13 Haunted [Design](#).

"When I was about 8 years old, I began setting up little haunted houses in my grandmother's basement," he said. "I would use sheets or whatever items I could find and paint my face. My grandmother would come down and pretend to be scared. It all grew from there."

In his teens, DeChamps started [volunteering](#) at a haunted house in Denmark. He explained that volunteers are like actors, and the room is their stage. Before long, he was helping build the houses and working on marketing.

"I really got into the industry when I was 17 and attended a haunt trade show in Chicago. As I saw all of the different products and displays, I kept thinking about how I could get involved in the industry and offer my experience and knowledge to other haunted houses," DeChamps said.

About a year later, he picked a business name and opened a separate bank account with the objective of making the haunted house industry in Wisconsin bigger and better by offering good advice at a low cost. Despite competition from throughout the nation, DeChamps believes that his passion for the business, creativity and hard work will make him stand out.

Area haunted houses might be in full swing this weekend, but DeChamps has his sights set on next year and the opening of Panic Chambers Hotel in Gresham, a house that he has been contracted to design. Room plans are being developed with attention to detail in every corner.

"It is like creating a movie set," he said. "I want to do something that hasn't been done in this area. Something new and innovative that will scare people."

The design will be considered "old school" with reliance on strong actors rather than the new [technology](#) animatronics. He plans on using frightening props, surprise scares and memorable details. It will be hands on from building to opening. DeChamps plans on being at the house every night that it's open.

"This is my chance to get my foot in the door," he said. "I have spent years building relationships, attending trade shows and learning the business. Now I have the opportunity to show the industry what my company can do."

Within the next five years, he is hoping that he'll be able to leave his full-time job to work his business and be nationally known as an innovator. In the interim, he will continue to feel the thrill of pulling on his \$500 silicon mask, situating himself in a well-designed room and scaring people. Despite being in the business, DeChamps himself is not immune to fright.

"Spiders scare me," he admitted.

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