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FrankenFest lumbers into the Turner-Dodge House

By SKYLER ASHLEY

A new festival is coming to Lansing that aims to prove just how fun the paranormal can be. Even though FrankenFest, hosted at the historic Turner-Dodge House, features ghosts hunters, true crime podcasters, macabre artists and horror-inspired cosplayers, co-founder and organizer Jerry Jodloski stresses he's more interested in spreading joy than scares. Think a little more "Monster Mash" instead of "The Exorcist."

"Halloween can have so many different genres attached to it. I'm on the fun side. It stems from growing up being a kid having fun decorating the house, your mom making handmade costumes and having those magical memories that stick with you," Jodloski said. "In our house, it was the best time."

FrankenFest hopes to scratch that nostalgic Halloween itch with more than 70 individual artists, vendors and creatives whose work encompasses a wide range of mediums. Guests wandering inside the Turner-Dodge House and around its grounds will be able to do more than purchase spooky art and gifts, there will also be a multimedia "Frankenstein" exhibit, aerialists, replicas of vehicles like Ecto-1 from "Ghostbusters" and several other attractions.

While art vendors will dot the Turner-Dodge House lawn, the house's interior will feature multiple food vendors and a cash bar. Revenue collected from the food and beverages will benefit Make-a-Wish Michigan and The League of Enchantment, a charity operation that features cosplayers dressed as superheroes that entertain children at local hospitals.

Visitors that head inside the house will also get to check out a paranormal investigation crash course presented by Southern Michigan Paranormal, a group of ghost hunters that check out infamous haunted sites across the state. The presentation will teach attendees about the tools of their trade and the different techniques used to determine whether a location is home to ghostly spirits.

Southern Michigan Paranormal will also share the results of its investigation of Turner-Dodge House, which will be completed the night before FrankenFest.

"It will be an introduction to the world of the paranormal. They'll run through everything they go through to investigate a house or site," Jodloski said. "There will be lots of stories for them to tell."

If tracking down ghoulish specters doesn't strike your fancy, FrankenFest has also brought along Kayse Gale and Elan Bridges creators of the Sinister, Strange and Suspicious Podcast.

"They have a huge following with their podcast, and we're delighted they're coming," Jodloski said. "It's amazing we've become interconnected."

FrankenFest is hardly Jodloski's first foray into the realm of larger-scale events that join together hor-



Jodloski



Johnston



During FrankenFest, Southern Michigan Paranormal will share results of their paranormal investigation of the Turner-Dodge House

ror hounds of all ages. He's also worked on spooky gatherings like How-To Halloween, Lansing Zombie Walk and The Killer Car Show. FrankenFest, however, is not a Jodloski solo operation. This time, he has an important helping hand and partner, his sister Krista Johnston. Many of Jodloski's childhood memories of the Halloween season are shared directly with Johnston, the two of them growing up learning to love the spooky side of life. Johnston also has experience working on festivals: She runs the DIY Street Fair, an annual weekend-long artist exhibition in Ferndale.

"This is a brother and sister team event. We've talked for years about joining forces and for lack of a better term, Frankenstein-ing our events together," Jodloski said. "Between the two of us, we have almost 15 years of experience doing festivals."

Jodloski said FrankenFest is a culmination of his many years working the local horror-tinged event and festival circuit. Many of the artists, vendors and exhibitions were booked thanks to connections Jodloski built while working on past projects. He wanted to curate the best of the best in order to make FrankenFest a living highlight reel of the most fascinating elements from past events that Jodloski booked or appeared at like How-To Halloween, Capital City Comic Con and The Killer Car Show. Just as the actual Frankenstein monster is composed of a grab-bag of body parts gathered from several different graves, FrankenFest too is a stitched-together amalgamation.

"It's a matter of cultivating these relationships over the years. It's scouting out events and meeting people. I try to help out my guests as much as I can. It's a great community, these people are amazing," Jodloski said.

"These groups have grown along with our events. I'm thrilled to be a part of their origin story."

FrankenFest is not the first of its kind to appear at the Turner-Dodge House. In 2019, it hosted Festival of Oddities, a similarly flavored event that also featured scores of paranormal guests and horror-themed artists and vendors, including Jodloski, who attended the festival to promote How-To Halloween.

Festival of Oddities founder Jenn Carpenter, who also writes the "Haunted Michigan" series, claims she was told by Turner-Dodge House management and the Lansing Parks and Recreation Department that the event was simply too big for it to be booked there once again, so she moved it to the historic Eaton County Courthouse, in Charlotte. She says Turner-Dodge House treated her unfairly and that Jodloski's FrankenFest is a copy of her event.

"I was told they didn't want to be associated with the paranormal and they couldn't host an event that large. I was bummed because I wanted to keep the festival in Lansing, that was really important to me," Carpenter said. "There are ways another spooky festival could have been brought to Lansing without doing an exact copy of my event."

While Turner-Dodge House event planner Barbara Loyer declined to comment, Jodloski responded to Carpenter's allegations by stating that neither he nor Carpenter invented the concept of a paranormal-themed festival. He denies that he plagiarized her event, stating that FrankenFest has been years in the making. Jodloski added that he wishes Carpenter well and said it's "a positive thing" for the Greater Lansing region to have multiple events that celebrate the Halloween niche.

"None of us have invented the spooky festival. They've been around for a long time. I wish her well. I'm not sure how she had a falling out with Turner-Dodge, but this is something we've worked on for years," Jodloski said. "I wish her the best. I think they've found a good home in Charlotte. There should be many shows for artists to sell their work."



FrankenFest
Saturday, July 10, 11 a.m.
Turner-Dodge House
100 E. North St., Lansing
FrankenFest.com