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Ghost hunter spooks crowd at city library

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A standing-room-only crowd at the Bowling Green Public Library “oohed,” “aahed” and showed one another goosebumps on their arms Thursday night as ghost hunter **Starr Chaney** played video and audio clips of paranormal activity in haunted areas around Kentucky.

Chaney – representing Nicholasville-based PsyTech, which she runs with her daughter, Jessi – gave a 30-minute presentation before the nearly hourlong slideshow in which she briefed attendees on the finer points of her craft. She and her daughter receive invitations, mostly in central Kentucky, to visit haunted homes, parks and businesses, where they use digital and analog recorders, digital cameras, dowsing rods and thermometers to determine whether ghosts and spirits are there.

There is a difference between ghosts and spirits, she added – spirits know they have “crossed over” and may travel wherever they please, while ghosts, who sometimes don’t realize they have died, are bound to a place, person or building because there’s something they need to finish. This is often the case on battlefields, where young soldiers were killed quickly and now haunt the grounds because they still feel a call of duty, Chaney said.

When communicating with spirits, she tries to establish who they are and, if the family is frightened, ask them to leave the humans alone; only the most malevolent spirits will ignore a plea for privacy. With ghosts, the first thing to do is to ask them to “cross over” to the spirit world so they are no longer tied to an area, she said.

“To me, not only is this a fascination, it’s real research as well,” Chaney said.

Often, their video cameras will pick up orbs, small spheres of light that float across the room. While some orbs are caused by dust catching the light, others are signs of paranormal activity. In one clip, Chaney can be heard shouting excitedly as a bright orb drifted into the picture, swooped up to look another member of the party in the eye, then moved away.

“A lot of people ask, ‘Does it scare me?’ ” she said, admitting that, at first, it did. “Now that we’ve been doing this nine years, it takes a lot to scare me.”

The audio clips are important because paranormal voices aren’t within human hearing range, Chaney said. She can spend hours in a house, only to listen to the tapes later and hear voices replying to the questions she asked of the ghosts and spirits. That’s referred to as EVP – electronic voice phenomena.

This was the case in one clip from the Mansion at Griffin Gate in Lexington, which houses the ghost of a 5-year-old girl named Greta. On the tape’s playback, in which Chaney and her daughter were “playing” hide-and-seek with the girl, a childlike voice can clearly be heard saying in a sing-song tone, “You’ll never find me.”

Other clips drew gasps from the crowd, like one from an otherworldly man – nicknamed “Mr. Happy Pants” – at Garrs Lane in Louisville who had a crude proposition for Chaney; an angry man’s voice repeating “Leave now” at Keene Springs Inn in Jessamine County; and a voice whispering, “Let me know when to talk” followed by an immediate 30-degree drop in temperature at HuffCull House in Louisville.

“We have ghosts in our house, and they love to imitate our voices,” Chaney said. “They do it all the time. They must think it’s high entertainment to see us run.”

Several audience members had ghost stories of their own – one man spoke of a spirit flinging tuna fish cans at his wife, while another reported feeling someone lie down next to him when no one was there.

For 15-year-old Adam Johnson of Edmonson County, his belief in ghosts was strengthened when he visited his grandfather’s grave on a windless day. While standing

there, a glass vase holding flowers fell off the tombstone and shattered.

"I'm really interested in ghosts," he said. "I think it's cool to come and hear somebody else explain what they saw. ... It's amazing that people can go and capture these things on tape."

Woodbury resident Dianne McKinney, who attended with Butler County's Coffee Shop Book Club, said as a child she became familiar with the paranormal.

"My aunt and uncle used to live in a haunted house, so I grew up with ghosts" who would rearrange blankets and open and close doors, McKinney said. "As children, we just referred to it as Casper. We got used to it."

Fellow book club member Connie Embry of Morgantown said the presentation was interesting, although she wasn't expecting a multimedia presentation.

"I think there are some unexplained things that happen," she said. "I wouldn't call them ghosts, but I do think there are unexplained phenomena."

While everyone at Thursday night's presentation seemed receptive to Chaney's message, she said that's not always the case. She's been confronted by people who tell her there are no such things as ghosts and those who are convinced she's hellbound for her fascination with the paranormal.

"When I talk to people, I try to remain open-minded and I expect the same in return," she said. "Life is too short, and I'm not spending it butting heads with people."

— For more information, visit <http://www.kyghosthunters.com>.

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