

# Ghost hunting

Pursuit is alive and well on TV and in Kentucky

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*Because of a reporter's error, a story in Tuesday's Features section noted incorrect times for the Mid-South Paranormal Convention this weekend. The event will run from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. both Saturday and Sunday at the Holiday Inn Southwest in Shively.*

Old Hollywood:

Advertisement Ghost hunting is for cartoons and comedians.

New Hollywood:

Ghost hunting is serious, even sexy, business.

Out with Scooby and Shaggy, and in with Jennifer Love Hewitt and The Atlantic Paranormal Society.

No telling what Bill Murray and Dan Akroyd would make of it, but real-life ghostbusters like what they see.

"The shows out now have done a lot to advance ghost hunting as an honest field of research," said Starr Chaney, of PsyTech-Kentucky Ghosthunters. "People don't just see us as lunatics running around the graveyard in the middle of the night anymore."

That's good, because dozens of erstwhile lunatics will be on the loose in Kentucky this weekend.

On Friday and Saturday, Chaney and her daughter, Jessi, will host the first Kentucky Paranormal Conference at Camp Nelson, a purportedly haunted Civil War site near Nicholasville.

On Saturday and Sunday, the Louisville Ghost Hunters Society will host the Mid-South Paranormal Convention at the Holiday Inn Southwest in Shively.

Scaredy cats can stay home and watch "Ghost Whisperer" on Friday, when Hewitt's popular drama returns for its second season on CBS (8 p.m., WLKY-32, Insight channel 5).

One of the SciFi Channel's most popular shows, "Ghost Hunters," features a pair of paranormally inclined plumbers from The Atlantic Paranormal Society (TAPS).

USA Network has two supernatural series, "The Dead Zone" and "The 4400," that are building cult followings.

In short, the boob tube hasn't been this haunted since "Poltergeist" pulled that adorable blond tot through the screen of the family Zenith.

"Ghost Whisperer" is one of eight spooky series returning to network and cable TV this fall. Among the dearly departed are Alyssa Milano, Holly Marie Combs and Rose McGowan, the fetching sister witches of "Charmed," which ended its eight-season run in May.

Keith Age, president of the Louisville Ghost Hunters, will soon be shooting another installment of "Spooked," a documentary that made its debut on SciFi in June.

The first installment was on the Waverly Hills Sanatorium in southwestern Jefferson County. Age has a scar on his noggin to prove that the creepy old place is haunted by some real meanies.

"A hunk of concrete came flying down the hallway and popped me right underneath my hat," Age said. "It just bust me wide open."

WLKY-TV reporter Jim Bulleit was there. He said the offending chunk didn't fall from the ceiling. It shot forward 7 or 8 feet.

Now *that's* an evil spirit -- but is it a believable tale?

Depends on who you ask.

Nearly one-third of Americans believe in ghosts, according to a 2005 Gallup Poll. Everyone else needs some convincing. They won't get it from science.

"The afterworld and the afterlife can't be reproduced in laboratory settings," said Chanda Wright, founder and president of the National Ghost Hunters Society. "You can't just walk into a lab and make Casper pop up."

Wright deals with skeptics two ways.

She tells them to go away: "You can't make anybody believe anything. I gave that up a long time ago."

Or she invites them to come along:

Almost every time she takes a non-believer on a ghost hunt, Wright said, "That person sees an apparition -- and that's pretty convincing to most people."

Some ghosts apparently are heard, not seen. Their spectral voices are audible only when recorded on magnetic tape. It's called EVP, electronic voice phenomena.

Dave Oester and his wife, Sharon Gill, head the International Ghost Hunters Society and publish a newsletter that claims more than 20,000 subscribers in 89 countries.

One night, Oester, Gill and Boo-Boo, the couple's Corgi, were leaving the Pioneer Cemetery in Congress, Ariz., a fabled ghost town out West. Walking to their RV, with tape recorders still rolling, they heard nothing special -- until the tape was replayed the next day.

"Clear as a bell," Oester said. "A little girl's voice said, 'Bye-bye, Boo Boo.' "

Wonder what Scooby-Doo would make of that?