

Scouts of Troop 264 in Olney gather with members of the county's Lions Clubs, Medstar Montgomery Medical Center, Sen. Craig Zucker and others to pack kits full of essential items for students who have Type 1 diabetes, continuing the legacy of Life Scout Conor Pugh, who began creating the kits after he received the diagnosis.

Popular Field of Screams lacks proper permits

by Judith Hruz
Editor

Before the attractions opened for the season, area residents were already frightened by the annual Field of Screams on the grounds of Olney Boys and Girls Club (OBGC) — frightened that the Halloween attraction was not fully permitted and therefore not safe for visitors to enter.

At press time, not all of the Field of Scream offerings had permits, especially the buildings in the wooded portion of the site.

What's more, the buildings have not had permits — but have been operating without them — for several years.

On April 20, 2021, Olney Boys and Girls Community Sports Association Inc. was ordered by the District Court of Maryland for Montgomery County to correct that, as well as adhere to the following conditions under County Law:

Obtain all required permits and inspections for special amusement structures associated

with Field of Screams;
Obtain the final inspection approvals for building permits; and
Do not operate Field of Screams without permits, inspection approvals and issued Certificates of Use & Occupancy.

Officials from Olney Boys and Girls Club did not respond to requests for an interview by press time.

According to Chris Allen, who is the special assistant in the director's office of the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services and an assistant state fire marshal, the 29 buildings in the so-called "Trail of Terror" portion of the Field of Screams site did not carry permits at press time in part because they did not have specific exit paths.

Buildings must have clearly defined and available paths to allow people inside to get out, he said, and the idea of a "haunted house" is to make it difficult and confusing for those who enter to get out.

The attractions outside of the woods do have

permits, Allen said.

No permits

OBGC began Field of Screams on a much smaller level more than two decades ago. It was popular from the start, and staved off a naming lawsuit by an organization in Pennsylvania who operated a Halloween attraction with the same name.

The Olney attraction is now run on a day-to-day basis by Steelhead Events, which operates on an annual lease with OBGC.

Steelhead could not be reached for comment, but according to a quote on the WTOPT website, Peter Ciferri, an attorney representing the club, said OBGC "gets a substantial fundraising pledge."

The attraction has grown into "55 horrifying stations," according to the Field of Screams Maryland website.

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