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Elgin cancels 'Nightmare' for second year; drive-thru Halloween event will return as COVID-19 continues

By **GLORIA CASAS**
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The intersection of Chicago St and Spring St. filled with humans, zombies and other creatures at the Nightmare on Chicago Street festival in downtown Elgin in 2019. The event is canceled again in 2021 because of COVID-19. (H. Rick Bamman / The Courier-News)

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It may be the dog days of summer, but Elgin is already planning for the return of Little Park of Horrors in October.

Little Park of Horrors is once again replacing the Nightmare on Chicago Street, which is being canceled for a second year due to COVID-19, officials said.

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“An event of this size and complexity requires planning to start as early as January to build props and secure the talent, equipment, vendors, and volunteers necessary to ensure the success of the event,” said Molly Gillespie, communications manager, of Nightmare on Chicago Street.

There’ll be plenty of fall fun even if Nightmare on Chicago Street, Elgin’s signature Halloween event that draws thousands of people to the downtown, isn’t happening this year. Little Park of Horrors had over 25,000 people drive through the westside park during its 11-night run last year, Gillespie said.

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Little Park of Horrors was part of a trend last year as the COVID-19 pandemic prohibited large gatherings. The drive-thru featured scary, yet kid-friendly scenes, designed by Fred Wimms. Wimms has been part of Nightmare on Chicago Street and designed sets for the festival.

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The event runs eight nights this year from Oct. 21-24 and 28-31 with new themed areas, Gillespie said. It will have a ticket/reservation system in place to alleviate some traffic issues seen in 2020, she said. Additionally, the route is reversed this year, with vehicles only able to enter the park from McClure Avenue, she said.

Tickets are \$10 and must be purchased in advance. Hours are from 6 to 9 p.m. Wing Park will be closed to traffic beginning Oct. 11. The city will release more details as the date nears, she said.

Also, this year, Art Harvest is returning on Saturday, Oct. 30. It'll be from 1 to 4 p.m. on DuPage Court, downtown Elgin. "We are still working to confirm all details for this event, but it will include a hay maze, arts and crafts, a public art hunt, and other activities," Gillespie said.

Gloria Casas is a freelance reporter for the Courier-News.

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