

## **Students seek thrills in paranormal pursuits**

**by Amanda Munger - Tuesday, May 11, 2010**

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/2712/students-seek-thrills-in-paranormal-pursuits/>

*When the staff of UW Oshkosh Today learned there was a student organization on campus that specializes in exploring the unexplainable, student communications specialist Amanda Munger was tasked with joining the Oshkosh Paranormal Investigative Division on an investigation. What follows is a firsthand account of her experiences — a novice's guide to ghost hunting.*

It's a Thursday night, and I'm walking the trail behind Riverside Cemetery in Oshkosh trying to spot ghosts. For real.

I'm here with four members of the Oshkosh Paranormal Investigative Division, a student organization that was started by University of Wisconsin Oshkosh junior Josh Hughes and his roommate, Justin Koss, also a junior.

"We watched all those ghost shows and figured we could do the same thing," Hughes said about starting the club in October of 2009.

By the looks of it, they definitely can. We are walking the one-and-a-half mile trail with flashlights, electronic voice phenomena recorders and a video camera with night vision. On other occasions, they also have used a Frank's box, which is said to allow spirits to communicate through radio frequencies.

While the members are good friends, there is a serious tone to the friendly banter.

Hughes, Koss, freshman Matt Smith and sophomore Stephanie Stey leave their cell phones behind so that they do not interfere with equipment. After quick introductions, we are off.

When the group has come to Riverside Cemetery at other times, they have felt the sensation of being touched and pushed forward. The cemetery is mentioned in the book "The Wisconsin Road Guide to Haunted Locations" by Chad Lewis and Terry Fisk. The authors say people have witnessed the ghosts of children running through the cemetery and by the water at night.

The group seems excited, but I am the type of person who clings to the arm of a friend and closes her eyes while walking through a haunted house and still comes out crying.

This should be an experience.

The Oshkosh Paranormal Investigative Division investigates places in and around Oshkosh that are said to have spirits. Their goal is not to eradicate the ghosts, but rather to interact and communicate with them.

To date, their most extensive investigation was at Elsing's Second Hand Shop in Stoughton, Wis. They spent the night and experienced a lot of unusual activity, including items falling off shelves and the sound

of breathing in one person's ear. One member suddenly felt so sick she had to leave.

Before we start walking, we divide ourselves into groups of three to avoid spooking spirits with too much noise. We let the other group walk about a half-mile ahead and then slowly start our trek. Hughes is telling ghost stories and keeping an eye out. Terrified, my eyes are clamped shut for parts of the walk.

Thankfully, I open them at a good time — we see black shadows crossing the path ahead of us. It's definitely not the other group since they are too far ahead, but we aren't sure if it is just our eyes playing tricks on us.

I'm tearing up but staying strong by trying to figure out how much longer it will be until we come to the end of the trail.

While some people may think it is naïve to believe in ghosts, much less hunt for them, Hughes thinks it is the allure of the unknown that keeps him interested.

"It's like aliens. Is there something out there?" he said. "There really isn't an in-between. You either believe or you don't."

Hughes and the group have gotten a lot of attention lately for their findings. Along with radio and newspaper interviews, the group is meeting with TV producers to discuss being featured on the show "The Haunted" on Animal Planet.

We keep the flashlight off for much of the walk because, according to the hunters, more activity happens when it's completely dark.

"It's almost like they are scared to come out when the flashlights are on," Hughes said.

We are still creeping along, slower than ever. There have been a few gasps and "Did you hear that?"s, followed by the quick snapping on of the flashlight. Fortunately for my nerves, illuminated in front of us are bullfrogs crossing the path or water glistening behind the trees. Nothing out of the ordinary. Nothing paranormal. Yet.

We near the part of the trail members say is scariest. Trees thickly line the path. I silently consider turning back but continue with a tight knot forming in my stomach.

About 10 minutes later, we see something I truly believe is paranormal. Three feet ahead of us, a bright light flashes out of the trees on the left and then goes off. It's as if someone is crouching in the brush with a flashlight.

At first we are convinced it is the other group hiding and trying to scare us, but it turns out they are still far ahead of us on the trail. It also can't be the cars in the distance because this light was too bright.

Now I'm crying. Whatever that was, I want to run away from it, not continue walking down this ominous trail.

We snap a few pictures to see if any orbs appear. An orb is a white or blue circle that appears in a picture and is said to be energy associated with the supernatural. Unfortunately, none appear in our shots.

To get orbs in pictures, Hughes said it is best to take pictures of a spot three times in a row so that it has a chance to develop.

Hughes said there is much about the paranormal that people don't understand.

"The paranormal is not just where someone died in a creepy 18th-century house located on a burial ground where a bunch of murders happened," he said. "The paranormal can be anywhere."

The rest of the walk is slightly uneventful, with a few questionable scratching noises and movements in the brush. We meet back at the start of the path and take a few pictures by gravestones while discussing the adventure.

The group's next investigation will be at the Appleton Curling Club.

I won't be joining them. One night of terror is more than enough!

- For more information on the Oshkosh Paranormal Investigative Division, visit [www.uwoorgs.orgsync.com/org/opid/home](http://www.uwoorgs.orgsync.com/org/opid/home) or e-mail Josh Hughes at [hughej67@uwosh.edu](mailto:hughej67@uwosh.edu).