Pictures come alive, night creatures screech, skeletons dance jigs, bones rattle and roll, ghosts fly, werewolves howl and zombies prowl.

Welcome to the strange world of Gerry and Sue Pallo and their son Kyle.

AN EERIE GHOST flew above Gerry Pallo and his zombie-looking son Kyle. Photo by Sam Arendt

This is the fifth year the Saukville family has turned their home at 207 Cottrell St. into a scary Halloween haunt, and it's the best one yet, they say.

The haunting will be from 6 to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Oct. 28 and 29, and 4 to 8 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 30.

There is no charge for the scary family event, but visitors are asked to bring a nonperishable food item for the Food Pantry in Port Washington. Cash donations are given to the MACC (Milwaukee Athletes Against Childhood Cancer) Fund.

Last year, a record 865 people went through the house and more than 40 boxes of food were delivered to the Food Pantry.

The Pallos and friend Matt Faldet, who rigged most of the electronic gadgets, are planning for even more visitors this year.

"We always have something different," Gerry Pallo said. "We may use some of the old props but in new ways. There is always something new."

The spooky fun is appropriate for children of all ages, he said.

Groups of three to five people at a time can go through the haunted house, with no more than two groups in the structure at a time.

Visitors wind their way through dark hallways to reach 13 spooky, themed rooms. The walk itself is an experience, and visitors must beware if they sense a presence behind them.

Hidden doors and windows, blasts of air and eerie music with a few blood-curdling screams thrown in makes the venture an event to remember.

“It’s the actors that bring it to life,” Faldet said. “All we can do is set it up.”

When Pallo, who’s dressed in dark, but normal clothing, welcomes excited or sometimes timid visitors to his house, he asks the adult if this a scare 1 or scare 2 group.

“We tone it down for little kids,” he said. “It has to be safe for everyone.”

Kyle said, “Rather than get in someone’s face, we may stand still and watch the kids.”

A lot of high school kids go through the house because they know the spooks, who show little mercy for peers.

“We have a group of adults who come in costume. We’re part of their Halloween party,” Pallo said.

While children and adults wait in lines that zigzag through the Pallo’s yard, which is filled with Halloween decorations, actors wander through the crowd and entertain.

Thirteen actors — Kyle’s friends and sports teammates — do the haunting. Several practices were held to assign roles, work out details and make sure equipment functioned as desired. Scare classes were also held.

“There is an art to scaring,” Kyle said. “It’s all in the timing — quick, scary jumps in and out are the best. Most of my friends are involved. They love it because we like to scare people.”

Rather than have actors wear masks this year, Pallo will paint their faces. He perfected Kyle’s zombie makeup last week.

“That’s about as gory as it gets,” he said as he painted realistic blood on his son’s darkened face.

Kyle has been the head spook since 2007, when he was in eighth grade at Thomas Jefferson Middle School in Port Washington and convinced his dad they should put on a bigger Halloween display than their next-door neighbors.

The Pallos decided to set up a haunted house in the garage.

“It took a week to build and about a second to go through,” said Kyle, now a senior at Port Washington High School.

Children who were trick-or-treating went through the haunted house before receiving candy.

It was so much fun, the father and son decided to make it bigger the next year and collect donations for the Food Pantry.

“We went eight feet out (of the garage) with a plastic frame and had more actors, more scenes and more props,” Pallo said. In 2009, the plastic structure covered half the driveway, and Faldet joined the team, bringing his electrical expertise to the project.

“I give him the idea and he makes it happen, like magic,” Pallo said. “We couldn’t do this without him.

“In 2010, we decided to go all the way out to the front sidewalk. We sent flyers home with students, called television stations and newspapers and had a record turnout.”

His wife doesn’t get involved in setting up the haunted house, but she helps promote the event, gets the candy treats, collects the food and tolerates bloody body parts in her foyer. She also feeds the gang after practices and hauntings.

“She makes the best chili,” her son said. “It’s so good.”

Pallo, who retired six years ago from the Milwaukee post office, has four part-time jobs, including Jer-Bear the clown. Jer-Bear doesn’t do hauntings, Pallo said.

He is also the maintenance man at Port Catholic School’s St. Mary’s campus and Community Learning Center, both in Port Washington, and does lawn cutting for Fransee Landscaping in Saukville.

His mind is constantly thinking up new scare routines.

This year, it’s been a challenge setting up the haunted house.

Wicked October winds wrought havoc, bringing down half of the black plastic-and-wood structure that had filled the driveway. The haunted space will be a little smaller, encompassing half the driveway and the garage, but few will notice the shortened venue.

It’s still almost 1,600-square-feet of pure Halloween fun.