That's scary!

She delves into imagination to create life-size monsters

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To most people, marbles, glue, an old dress, string and gallon drums are junk.

To Elsie Price in the Farmington Hills Parks Maintenance Division it's a treasure trove – a chance to yet again create something.

If you have taken the Haunted Hike in Heritage Park during Halloween and noticed that the figures – a giant spider, leprechaun, Merlin, a witch – are a bit lifelike – thank Price. They're her creations.

"We always had a Haunted Hike," said Price, a parks maintenance laborer. "The first year it did rather well. But we used a mannequin."

That mannequin, however, just didn't do it for Price, who thought the hike needed something a little more creative and realistic. And it was expensive.

"I got to thinking how people make dolls," she said. "I thought perhaps we could add something to make it better."

But Price's way of making it better wasn't to go to a costume store or to order expensive lifelike forms that she could dress up.

Instead, Price used what was at hand to create her monsters and witches, and anything else that could speed your heart up on a haunted hike.

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Elsie Price
—parks maintenance employee

One of her creations is made of five-gallon paint containers – the body – padded to represent the human form. Hands are filled latex gloves. Heads are plastic foam wig heads decorated with fake hair. Clay forms the faces.

Looking good

Price's giant, ferocious-looking spider was indeed a fake spider in another life. But she just didn't like the looks of it. "I thought, 'Oh, we can do better than that.'"

And she did. She kept the existing plastic pumpkins that formed the spider's body. The face is made of various parts from Halloween masks to give a truly scary appearance to the arachnid.

Costumes for her figures are made of "bits and pieces of whatever I can find," said Price who joined parks maintenance at 18 and right out of high school.

How does she decide whether a creation should be a witch or a clown, or Merlin or a hairy spider? "I just try to pick something interesting," Price said. "I guess I watch too much television."

Keeping up with what's trendy in the scary department, Price and Cathy Wendrick, recreation programmer, stop by other communities to see what's in and what's out.

"We've made it a tradition to go and see what other people are doing," Price said. "The city is always family-oriented with

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Handmade: *Elsie Price made this giant spider for the Haunted Hike. It's more than life-size and will likely make you step back when you see it.*

Staff Photos by Bill Brenner

Create: *The witch Elsie Price is touching up, as well as the leprechaun in the background are two of the nine life-size figures she has created. She uses anything she can get her hands on, such as wig head and gallon drums, for her creations.*

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