

Bringing Methodology to the Madness

The popularity of television shows such as SciFi channel's "GhostHunters" has created an explosion of groups of individuals interested in studying the paranormal. The premise of these groups, as with the shows they follow, is much the same – a group of individuals running around dark, spooky buildings with their camcorders running; claiming every "orb" or strange event is evidence of life hereafter. However, February 2007 brought the birth of a new kind of paranormal research group. ARPAST – the Arkansas Paranormal and Anomalous Studies Team – began from the vision of its two founders, Larry Flaxman and Tiffany Pressler. Flaxman and Pressler wanted to bring true scientific methodology to the study of paranormal research. "I've seen so many groups displaying pictures of "orbs;" claiming they are a BSF – basic soul form," says Pressler. "How can anyone unilaterally claim to know something like that is a soul form? Such a claim is really only an unsubstantiated hypothesis, not really "proof" of anything."

Flaxman and Pressler decided, from the ground up, their group would be different. ARPAST was officially incorporated within the state of Arkansas, and the group is applying for 501c(3) tax-exempt status from the IRS. "We want to take this group to the next level and make it a model to paranormal and scientific research groups alike," says Flaxman. The mission of ARPAST relates back to the basic building blocks of scientific study – to create and utilize controlled experiments to test theories and analyze results surrounding paranormal activity. ARPAST currently incorporates specialized training for their researchers and an impressive inventory of state-of-the-art equipment within their experiments to gather various environmental and empirical data. "The data is placed in a custom-designed research database and analyzed for statistical trends and correlations," says Pressler. "It's our goal to find the key to unlock the scientific answers to explain what people experience – whatever that "answer" may be. It is not our mission to "prove or "disprove" the existence of ghosts, but rather to uncover the quantum mechanics of paranormal activity so that it will someday be understood as conventional science."

For more information on ARPAST, visit their website at www.arpast.org.