



Dressing in costume is often a family affair at Goldendale's Trunk or Treat event.

Photos by Jeanne Morgan

Trunk or Treat!

Annual Goldendale event ensures howlin' good times on Main Street

By James Spainhower

Goldendale's annual Trunk or Treat event the Saturday before Halloween has garnered the attention of an increasing number of folks seeking a good time on a budgetary shoestring.

The community celebration provides low-cost entertainment for the entire family in a safe setting. But early on, Trunk or Treat was a small community affair that had some cobwebs to be cleared away before it could reach its full potential.

According to Earlene Sullivan, director of the Greater Goldendale Chamber of Commerce, the Halloween event started as an outgrowth of Goldendale's Saturday Market.

"It was called a farmers market, but back then mostly local arts and crafts were marketed," Earlene says. "My husband and I had lived in the Tri-Cities area, and a church we attended

sponsored a Trunk or Treat event in that area. We thought it would be great to have a similar event along Goldendale's Main Street and the idea was embraced by the Downtown Merchants Association.

"So we loaded up the truck with 3,000 pounds of pumpkins and printed fliers advertising a free pumpkin-carving contest. There were parked cars with costumed participants handing out candy from their trunks. Businesses on Main Street stayed open and also handed out candy."

Festivities were so well-received by the community that the Downtown Merchants Association wanted to make Trunk or Treat an annual event. Although Trunk or Treat experienced a bit of a scheduling conflict—initially it was on Halloween night—increasing numbers of people celebrated the following two years. Little did anyone realize at the time that the effects of a natural calamity would infuse new blood into Trunk or Treat.

Kim and Jack Methe, owners of Goldendale's General Store, had just undergone a baptism of catastrophic proportions

by surviving the life-changing events of Hurricane Katrina. As residents of New Orleans, they witnessed the devastation wrought by one of the worst natural disasters in recorded U.S. history. By late 2008, they both decided that a change of scenery was in order.

The couple relocated to Goldendale, immediately taking over management obligations for the family-owned general store. They brought with them some of the festive traditions they grew up with.

“New Orleans is famous for its parties,” Jack says. “We got involved because we both like Halloween and thought Trunk or Treat would serve as a great opportunity for a good-time family friendly street party.”

The Methes set about creating a “haunted hall” using a portion of the General Store’s covered porch. Kim solicited a number of people and Main Street businesses to boost community participation.

“One week before the event on October 31, I got several cars to park along Main Street to pass out candy from their trunks,” Kim says. “Several Main Street businesses also stayed open to hand out goodies. There were about 100 attendees that year.”

The Methes thought holding the event on the Saturday before Halloween might increase attendance numbers. They were right.

“The numbers have really increased. Last year, we had close to 900 people attending,” Kim says.

Special events—such as the street dance, karaoke or the costume contest—cost nothing other than the time required to participate. Concessions, be they the balloon pop or the ring toss games, are 25 cents, and everyone wins a prize. Admission is reasonable for those who are brave enough to enter Trunk or Treat’s Haunted Hall. Food and refreshments are a bargain. A person can get a can of soda and a hot dog for \$1.

“The plan was always to give kids something to do that’s safe and inexpensive,” Jack says. “Both kids and adults can dress up in their favorite costumes and socialize.”

Seeing potential for even greater growth, the Methes approached Goldendale City Council members earlier this year asking to expand upon Trunk or Treat’s offerings and increase attendance. City council members unanimously approved cash assistance to help with advertising the 2014 event. Trunk or Treat organizers can reach out to adjacent communities in Klickitat, Yakima, Wasco and Hood River counties.

As part of a concerted effort to make Trunk or Treat a resounding success this year, additional concessions, a beefed-up Haunted Hall, and daytime events preceding evening festivities are planned.

The lineup of toothsome delights also will be given a boost with elephant ears—deep-fried flour fritters sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon—and cotton candy, joining the traditional



Goldendale community members gather for Trunk or Treat around the fire pit on Main Street.

fare of hot dogs, soda and chips.

The Methes are excited that 2014 marks the first year daytime events are sponsored.

“The big new event this year will be the Parade of Coffins followed by the Coffin Race,” Kim says.

In the Coffin Race, each imaginatively designed, road-worthy coffin must adhere to strict construction guidelines. Each Coffin Race entry is composed of five members—one driver and four attendants—who propel their coffin over the finish line. The sequestered track on Main Street is one block long.

“Local businesses have expressed an interest in participating by donating cash and merchandise, which will be given as prizes for the event,” Jack says.

The Methes insist the Trunk or Treat celebration is not just their baby.

“Ever since we took over hosting Trunk or Treat, the community has been very supportive,” Jack says. “Word got around and there were additional volunteers. We couldn’t put out such a spectacular show if it wasn’t for all the volunteers who have come forward to take part.” ■

For more information about Goldendale’s Trunk or Treat event, or to volunteer, call (509) 773-4941, or go to www.trunkortreat.gorgelink.org.