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## Locals find spooky, socially distanced ways to celebrate Halloween

By Diane Claytor



This scary monster will be greeting visitors in Moraga. Photo provided Jessie and Jake Seitler and their creepy friends are ready for Halloween. Photo Diane Claytor

pinatas, neighborhood costume parades and outdoor parties within small, already-established "bubbles." And even some limited trick-or-treating.

One social media poster declared that she was putting out a bowl of candy, with individual scoopers provided for the trick-or-treaters to take with them. Others said they'll put individual treat bags out, placing each one six feet from the other, use a grabber to place candy in bags or even tossing pieces out.

And then there's Sue Carlson, who, in past years has given out more than 500 pieces of candy. This year, with the help of her adult son, she'll be shooting candy through a lighted tube from the top step of her well-decorated Moraga home to the treat bags held by costumed trick-or-treaters down on the sidewalk. "Halloween has always been one of our favorites," Carlson said. "This year, more than ever, having a day we can celebrate something fun makes it all the more special. Families can spread joy by decorating, handing out candy safely or walking up and down the street in costumes and feel a sense of community as well as a little bit of magic."

Celebrations may be different but certainly no less fun. A.J. Brown and her family have, for the last eight years, gone to a party at the same friends' house. No party this year; instead she took her two kids to an immersive outdoor drive-in haunted house.

Mike Seitler and his family have also celebrated Halloween in the same way for many years: trick-or-treating with a particular group of friends. But this year, all seven families are donning their costumes and going to play mini-golf. "It's a socially distanced activity," Seitler noted, "with each family at a different hole. We'll still be able to be together while apart." This will be followed by a "dark and spooky" candy hunt for just his two kids, who, like most others, are still excited about their favorite holiday.

Erin Roth said her 8-year-old twins, who usually trick-or-treat on Martha Street with throngs of kids, will be partying with their small pod in Orinda. They actually seem "super excited" about doing something different, Roth said. "At this age, the goal is to get candy and they don't really care from where. They want costumes and they want candy," she noted. "And they'll have both."

It appears there will be no lack of candy.

Zoonies, the popular Lafayette candy shop, sells Boo Bags that are meant to be given anonymously and include a "You've Been Boo'd" note and a suggestion to "keep the spirit going and boo your neighbors." These bags range in price and can be generic or custom made. Orinda's Glorietta Elementary School's PTA even sold Boo Bags as a fundraiser. (It may not be too late to get your own Boo Bags. Call Zoonies at 925-299-9866.)

Local real estate agent, Kristina McCann, put together Boo Boxes containing candy and small toys. "I did this because I knew many parents were feeling sad and unsure about what Halloween would look like this year. I wanted to provide a little something to make kids happy," she explained. A social media post offering her free Boo Boxes resulted in hundreds of requests.

The schools and local PTAs know their students are missing the typical costume parades, room parties and school carnivals so they, too, are creating a variety of fun virtual activities. There are pumpkin carving contests, themed craft projects, Zoom and drive-by costume parades, COVID-safe candy scavenger hunts and virtual as well as socially-distanced dance parties.

Finally, the city of Lafayette is getting into the Halloween spirit by sponsoring the "spooktacular" Lafayette Halloween Dress Up Drive, encouraging residents to dress up their houses, businesses and cars. Participants were asked to register and a map of decorated houses and businesses will be posted Halloween week. (lovelafayette.org). A ride around town on Halloween will provide another safe activity for Lamorinda

Creepy black spiders crawling up windows and walls, weaving their webs through bushes and doorways. Well manicured lawns turned into graveyards. Skeletons, witches and ghosts swaying from trees. Pumpkins of varying shapes and sizes adorning doorways. It's Halloween in Lamorinda. And while this year's holiday may be different from previous years (it's 2020, after all), it will, nevertheless, be filled with fun and candy - lots and lots of candy.

The Lamorinda communities are asking residents to follow the CDC and state guidelines which discourage trick-or-treating and large parties. But that's not stopping the determination and creativity of Lamorinda parents to create the best Halloween possible. "Our kids have already had school, activities, trips, sports and performances canceled," said Lafayette mom Heather Cousins. "There has to be a way we can do Halloween safely." Turns out there are many ways.

Families are planning backyard candy and scavenger hunts, pumpkin carving and painting, cookie and haunted house decorating, scary movie nights,

residents.

Lamorinda has really come together for the kids. Moraga's Amy Sidensol notes that Halloween 2020 seems to be bringing out the best in parents. "The creativity is amazing and I can't help but wonder if this will be the start of some new traditions for future Halloweens."



## DJ brings safe Halloween bash to local kids

Ryan Oettinger, better known as DJ RyanO, has been providing socially safe, high energy, engaging entertainment throughout Lamorinda neighborhoods since COVID hit. With Halloween upon us, he's created a special "spooktacular experience" for "spooky and kooky creatures of all sizes."

DJ RyanO will go to local "ghoulesacs, treats or graveyards" and provide Halloween-inspired, socially distanced outdoor dancing, games, activities and entertainment. He has dozens of fun activities, including Frankenstein Freeze, Winnie the Witch Says, Monster Shuffle, Musical Pumpkins and Pumpkin Patch Stomp. "I can entertain 10 kids or 25 kids for several hours," Oettinger said, "with spaced out curated activities themed to music." He'll be doing just that for a group of local second-graders. "We'll gather in a parking lot, the kids will all be safely spaced out and we'll do high-energy, high-impact Halloween-themed dances, activities and challenges."

For more information, check out [www.driveupdj.com](http://www.driveupdj.com).

-- D. Claytor

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