

The Columbian
Life

Section D

Today's weather picture by **Cassie Arrowsmith**, 9, Battle Ground, Captain Strong Elementary School



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2006

Kicking candy

Doling out toys on Halloween a fun departure from sweets

By **BRETT OPPEGAARD**
Columbian staff writer

More than 36 million trick-or-treaters are expected to be roaming throughout the nation on Halloween night, according to census pollsters, ringing doorbells and getting their little bags filled with candy.

Why candy? This is the confectioners' No. 1 money-making holiday, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Americans are expected to spend

about \$5 billion on Halloween treats, decorations and costumes this year, and participation is rapidly increasing. Candy makers have combined marketing, advertising and rhetoric to thoroughly commandeer what originally was a Celtic harvest celebration.

Pop culture professor Robert Thompson of Syracuse University says that instead of cherished heritage, handing out candy is more of a case of shrewd business development.

"The confection industry has had

almost a monopoly on this big deal for a while," he says. "There is a lot of money moved in celebration of Halloween, and there are a lot of people looking to see how they can get a piece of that. There's really an active attempt now (by other kinds of businesses) to see if they can put something else in those bags." The average consumer plans to spend \$60 on Halloween this year, according to the National Retail Federation, compared to \$50 last year. But is more candy the answer?

TOYING WITH BENEFITS

Americans annually consume 26 pounds of candy. That figure accounts for every child. So, unless you own stock in Hershey Food Corp., here are five reasons you should consider giving small toys or something other than candy to kids on Oct. 31:

1. You're not really breaking tradition. The U.S. Census Bureau notes that the first recorded citywide Halloween celebration didn't occur until 1921, in Anoka, Minn. Thompson says activities considered Halloween mainstays today really are behaviors that are just a generation or two old. "Once upon a time," he says, "fresh produce was a valuable thing. An orange in a Halloween stocking was considered the primo gift."
2. Candy is not signifi-

cantly cheaper than little toys. Per unit, the candy packages cost about 10 cents. The items featured on this page average 14 cents apiece.

3. Speaking of math, add these up: Sedentary lifestyles, super-sized meals, fast food, empty calories and an increasing regularity of "special" occasions and holidays that feature treats. The American Obesity Association has found that obesity has doubled in children ages 6 to 11 and tripled in kids 12 to 19 in just the past two decades. About half of the kids in America now eat less than one serving of fruit per day, and about a third eat less than one serving of non-fried vegetables, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
4. Leftover toys can be stored with decorations and given out again next year. Their nonperishable nature keeps adults from feeling compelled to finish what's left in the bowl on Nov. 1.

5. Toys are more long-term fun. Candy is great, in limited doses, but a mixture and variety would be better. Thompson says, "knocking on the door, getting a couple of pennies never did the job. Apples or raisins, that was the worst, like getting a savings bond for Christmas. Toys for Halloween? That's a system that could catch on."



Parachuters

Cost: Eight for \$1.50 (Target).
Price per unit: 19 cents.

Why: Exciting and physically fun, building throwing, catching and handling skills. Can lead to discussions about air, lift and gravity.
Why not: Might be too complicated and frustrating for small children. Tangled strings.

A sampling of small toys that could serve as alternatives to Halloween candy

Spider rings

Cost: 42 for 99 cents (Walgreens).
Price per unit: 2 cents.
Why: These glow in the dark. Creepy without being scary.
Why not: Won't fit really small fingers.

Glow bracelets

Cost: Six for \$1 (Dollar Tree).
Price per unit: 17 cents.
Why: Not only a cool accessory to any costume, this one increases safety at night.
Why not: Light fades, and these only glow once, so timing has to be right. Also, these could make a mess if broken open.



Play-Doh

Cost: 20 tiny tubs for \$3.99 (Fred Meyer).
Price per unit: 20 cents.
Why: Hands-on activity. Builds creativity and artistic skills, like working with brightly colored clay.
Why not: Some parents don't like this stuff. It's messy. It also gets brittle if not kept in tub with lid tight.



Stickers

Cost: Eight for \$1.86 (Wal-Mart).
Price per unit: 23 cents.
Why: Like stickers, without the residue. Can decorate places that stickers can't.
Why not: Unlike stickers, mistakes can't be easily corrected. Misplaced, can make a mess.

Clappers

Cost: 18 for \$1.99 (Walgreens).
Price per unit: 11 cents.
Why: Can use as percussion while making music or simply slap around in goofy noise-making contests.
Why not: Parents might not have kind thoughts of you, if this whap-whap-whapper becomes more than just the favorite of the night.

Cost: 20 boxes (with nine stickers per box) for \$2.76 (Wal-Mart).

Price per unit: 14 cents per box.
Why: Cute images, kitties and puppies in this case, contrast the holiday's typically nightmarish characters. Can be used to decorate lunch boxes, paper, etc.
Why not: Stickers often get put in places where they aren't intended, which leads to parents having to do the peeling and cleaning.

Kazoos

Cost: 12 for 80 cents (Party City).
Price per unit: 7 cents.
Why: Introductory musical instrument. Can hum Halloween tunes, adding to the festivities.
Why not: Noisemakers of any kind can become irritating.

Yo-Yos

Cost: 18 for \$2.99 (Fred Meyer).
Price per unit: 17 cents.
Why: Builds hand-eye coordination. Practice can lead up to interesting tricks.
Why not: Can be frustrating for small children, and these cheap models can be hard to operate.

HOW CANDY COMPARES:

Peanut M&Ms
Cost: \$2.11 for 17 packages (Target).
Price per unit: 12 cents.
Mixed bag of Kit Kat, Rolo, Almond Joy and Heath
Cost: \$5 for 56 packages (Target).
Price per unit: 9 cents.

Photos by **MIKE SALSBU**
The Columbian

1. Spooky delights

Just in time for Halloween, Tim Burton's 1993 stop-motion-animated hit "The Nightmare Before Christmas" is back to theaters for a limited engagement. This time around, the movie gets a "Disney Digital 3-D" makeover. Once you don a pair of souvenir collectible 3-D glasses, you'll be closer than ever to Jack Skellington's attempts to take over the Christmas holiday. The film is rated PG.
When: Now through Tuesday.
Where: Regal Cascade 16 Cinemas, 1101 S.E. 160th Ave., Vancouver.
Admission: \$8 to \$11.
Telephone: 360-882-5458.



On the Web: www.fandango.com or www.nightmare3dmovie.com.

For another kind of Halloween fix, stop by Fright-Town at the Rose Quarter through Halloween night. FrightTown offers three haunted attractions taking up 40,000 square feet, including Baron Von Goolo's Museum of Horrors, the Food Court of the Damned and Elshoff Manor: the Asylum and the Black Box. Be warned, though: The Black Box isn't suited for children ages 15 and younger.

When: Now through Oct. 31. Open 7 to 10 p.m. Sundays through Thursdays, 7 to 11 p.m. Fridays and

TRY THIS
Make the most of your weekend

Saturdays.
Where: Rose Quarter, 1 Center Court, Portland.
Admission: \$20.
On the Web: www.frighttown.com.

2. Live-music buzz
Craving live music in



an intimate venue? The Grind Gourmet Coffee Shop in downtown Vancouver presents three bands every Saturday night. Offering a variety of genres, including jazz, folk and alternative, the shows take place indoors. If the weather warms up again, owner DJ Doran plans to move the performances into the outdoor garden area. Even if live music isn't your thing, the Grind offers board games and free Wi-Fi.
When: 7 p.m. Saturday nights.
Where: 611 W. 11th St., Vancouver.
Admission: \$5, which includes free coffee.
Telephone: 360-696-0206.
On the Web: www.thegrindgourmet.com.

3. Rapper's delight

Bay Area rapper Lyrics Born co-headlines

a hip-hop concert with former Jurassic 5 turntablist Cut Chemist on Sunday night. Cut Chemist's most recent solo outing, "The Audience's Listening," dropped in July and finds the DJ incorporating samples from several decades while crafting a worldly hip-hop sound. Sharing the bill is veteran rapper Lyrics Born, still touring behind his 2005 remix release, "Same I@#\$ Different Day" (itself a remix record featuring tracks from his full-length solo debut, "Later That Day ...").
When: 9 p.m. Sunday.
Where: McMenamins Crystal Ballroom, 1332 W. Burnside St., Portland.
Admission: \$20.
Telephone: 360-573-7700 (Ticketmaster).

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Coming Sunday:

It's the job of these characters to make you scream /D1