

Elkridge church welcomes 'trunk-or-treaters'

ELKRIDGE - A "family of pirates" encouraged "trunk-or-treaters" at St. Augustine Church in Elkridge to claim handfuls of candy by walking a plank leading to a car-turned-ship.

A powder blue Volkswagon Beetle parked in the church's back parking lot played "Baby Shark" on loop. Its open trunk was adorned with teeth, and its owner wore a shirt decorated with fake blood.

Preparing for the Oct. 28 event, Ron McLean decorated the open hatch of his Honda Pilot with colorful fall decorations. He took a break to help his son, Ryan, finish his costume.

"Alright, come here so I can paint your head," McLean said before drawing a lightning bolt on his 9-year-old's forehead, completing the Harry Potter ensemble.

McLean's wife, Rosa, was busy coordinating the arrival and placement of more than two dozen cars signed up to hand out candy at the fifth annual Trunk-or-Treat sponsored by the Catholic Community of Ascension and St. Augustine.

Ryan, a fourth-grader at Monsignor Slade Catholic School in Glen Burnie, was one of at least three Harry Potter characters present. Disney characters were prevalent, as well as a hedgehog, Dorothy from the "Wizard of Oz" and even a red-white-and-blue Betsy Ross rounding out the mix.

Gillian Kraeuter makes homemade costumes every year for her three children. This year, her entourage included ten-year-old Emery as a Gameboy; nine-year-old Rory as "Where's Waldo?"; and six-year-old Mina as "The Elf on the Shelf."

"You get to meet other members of the church," said Kraeuter, whose family has lived within walking distance of St. Augustine for 12 years. "It's builds a sense of community."

The Trunk-or-Treat not only drew families with young children. Most trunk-owners, including Marie Espiritu, just wanted to have fun.

"I wanted to find another way to be a part of the community," said Espiritu, who has taught Vacation Bible School for two years.

She and her brother, Anton, dressed up as "Lilo and Stitch." The circus, Harry Potter's world and a gumball machine were among the other trunks' themes.

It was the first Trunk-or-Treat experience for parishioner Rob Kendle. His yard is always decorated for Halloween, and he wanted to bring his creations - trick-or-treaters from "It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown" - to a new venue.

Chicken wire, mache techniques and insulation foam maintain the integrity of the characters' original look, but also make it three-dimensional, something very important to Kendle.

"I've always been a big fan of Halloween," he said. "I didn't want to buy someone's view of what a zombie (or other character) looked like."

Many trunks provided games for the trick-or-treaters, as well as candy. One corn hole set encouraged players to "score one for each person of the Trinity." Another to "throw stones in honor of St. Stephen," the first martyr.

One trunk was set up with a board covered in pictures of a devil, with "St. Michael the Archangel, Defend Us in Battle," written above. Kids used a slingshot to shoot at the devils - it was one of the most popular spots on the parking lot.

The Trunk-or-Treat was hosted by the family ministry of the Catholic Community of Ascension and St. Augustine, which also sponsors events such as Pentecost parties, gingerbread house decorating and game nights.

"Our goal is to get younger families involved in the church," said Laurie Kaplan, one of the family ministry coordinators. "There's just so many families with young kids - it's just nice to bring them into the faith."

Father John A. Williamson, pastor, said the parish of approximately 3,000 families

has many with young children. He attributes the large number to the school on St. Augustine's campus, and general population growth in the area.

As families streamed into the event, Father Williamson anticipated another Trunk-or-Treat crowd of 200 on the St. Augustine campus.

"We have a very active family ministry ... Young families respond when we do things for the kids," Father Williamson said. "Halloween is part of the (society's) culture - why not make it Christian and bring it here?"

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