

Trick or treat?

Online, second-hand stores scare up ideas for Halloween

By Karen Pilarski
Enterprise Staff

WAUKESHA— Bright orange pumpkins and gray cardboard tombstones are starting to pop up in yards. Pretty soon a mass of vampires, princesses and cowboys will be ringing doorbells. It is time to start thinking about Halloween costumes before the monster mayhem begins. From zombies to cartoon characters, it is fun for people to dress up.

The downside of costume shopping is sifting through racks of costumes at crowded chain stores. Another frightening sight is wearing a T-shirt that says "this is my costume" in mortifying defeat.

You don't need break the bank to look good

"Imagination is the only that thing that curbs what you can do. You can find inexpensive costumes by using your imagination", said Cheryl Lightholder, communications manager at Goodwill.

Instead of buying the same Superman costume as everyone else, why not make your own? A pizza pan as a shield, balloons as muscles and a pillowcase as a cape can transform someone into a super-strength crime fighter.

Lightholder said Goodwill tries to give people thoughts and ideas for items found in the stores. They encourage people to think what something could be.

Lightholder found a big watch with a round face years ago. She suddenly

thought of the white rabbit from "Alice in Wonderland". She bought a hat, vest and jacket from Goodwill. She found pink lining to make ears and white gloves.

Goodwill has content online to help people with money saving decor costumes, tips and party ideas.

"Do it yourself (DIY) is a big trend right now, people are energized by it," she said.

The home décor expert for Goodwill used a tomato plant stand and connected lights to it to resemble a Christmas tree. The same stand was used with a long blond wig and a hat to make Cousin It from "The Addams Family".

She doesn't think people have to pay tons of money to create a statement piece. She has observed younger kids coming in to find their own look thus breaking out of the cookie cutter mold.

Some may assume ugly Christmas sweater season is when places like Goodwill see an increase in sales. "Halloween is our Christmas. The month of October typically sees a 15-20 percent increase in sales over any other month," Lightholder said.

Once Halloween is done people can donate costumes or other items. Any donation helps with Goodwill's mission, which is to provide training and employment support services for people with disabilities and disadvantages.

"People continue to buy from us and help out the community," Lightholder said.

A cool costume is a click away

Costumes are not solely used for Halloween. "Adults, kids and groups use costumes for adult parties, mud runs, pub crawls, masquerade balls or any opportunity to dress up," said Holly Botsford, public relations and social media manager of BuySeasons, Inc.

Under the umbrella of buyseasons.com are www.costumeexpress.com, which has a large clientele of mothers with young children, and www.Buy-Costumes.com, which sees more adults as customers.

"This year, characters from shows and movies such as "Star Wars" and "Inside Out's" character of Disgust are popular," said Botsford. A trend has been "Minions," which makes an excellent group costume including pet costumes that correlate with them.

A benefit to buying a costume online is the convenience. "Customers purchase costumes of great value and high quality. It is delivered right to you", Botsford said. The website has resources to help costumers figure how to add their own personal touches such as hair, makeup or accessories.

No matter if a person makes his or her own costume or buys it online, Halloween is all about fantasy. She said it provides someone an opportunity to explore different avenues of who they are.

"They can try out different personalities that they haven't explored before. They have permission to go into that world", said

Botsford.

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