

Pumpkin *Humanitate*

Project Pumpkin shown through the eyes of children

By JOE PARKHILL
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

As I walked onto the Quad on Oct. 28, my eyes were dazzled by the festivities. Orange and black balloons, tomb stones and colored streamers decorated the Quad as clowns, jugglers and escorts occupied the area, preparing to give the underprivileged children of Winston-Salem a Halloween to remember. I admired all of the action of Project Pumpkin while waiting in line to meet the children I had to escort.

Around 3:30 p.m. I greeted my children, Jamom and Jacom. These five-year-old twin brothers, dressed in identical, clothes

were eagerly awaiting a good time. They ran toward Potat House, but were interrupted by two jubilant clowns. The brothers were amazed at the clowns' ability to blow up balloons and shape them into objects. Jamom took his butterfly balloon, Jacom his dog, and we continued on to Potat.

The suite doors were open and the students were ready to give out candy. Jamom and Jacom ran from door to door, collecting goodies and politely thanking the students who were handing them out.

After completing every first floor suite and the towers, Jamom and Jacom wanted to focus their attention on something new. Due to the wide variety of options, we were able to choose a different event.

We went to the Taylor House lounge, the location of the young children's carnival. There Jamom and Jacom participated in games such as putting out a jack-o-lantern with a water gun, knocking down pyramids of cups, fishing and playing basketball.

The children were excited because whether they won or lost, they were rewarded with toy prizes. It was quite entertaining, but the boys were anxious to move on to the haunted house in

the Sigma Pi fraternity lounge.

Jacom followed his brother's lead to the lounge, but seemed a little more hesitant. Jacom looked into the dark room, full of spider webs and scary music and refused to enter.

Jacom was taken in by another escort while I stayed behind with his scared brother. Some children seemed to love the haunted house, while others left crying as I waited for Jamom to return.

He came back so excited that he demanded to go in again. After coming out of the house again with equal or even greater enthusiasm, we went back to the Quad, only after promising that we would return before the end of the day.

Our next mission was to acquire as many balloons as possible. Their favorite balloons were the ones shaped as swords. Jamom received a yellow sword, but preferred a different color. So he ran a few feet away, popped it and returned asking the clown "Can I have a black sword, mine just popped?" The clown laughed and met the devious child's demands. Everyone was in the Halloween spirit and was having a good time. The idea of the haunted house popped back into Jamom's head, and Jacom agreed to go with him.

The third time was the charm, and Jacom ventured into the room with his brother and me. I crawled as they walked to the corridor with their names being howled across the room. In the corner, they each threw a bean-bag into a pumpkin's mouth.

They continued on towards a table with a black cloth over it. People urged them to

stick their hands into the cloth, where a slimy substance scared them.

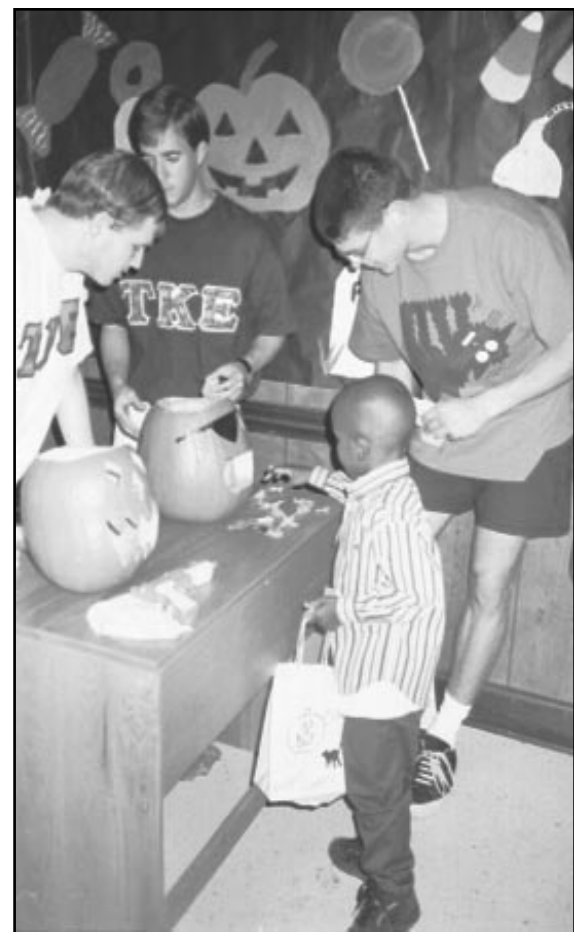
Then a puppet reminiscent of a gremlin jumped out from behind the cloth. It surprised them, but they soon became infatuated by it. The brothers examined it carefully, but still could not decipher exactly what it was and if it was alive.

As Jacom turned around, someone with a distorted mask terrified him. He fell back into my arms, and his brother rushed to his defense. Jacom attacked the face with his new balloon sword, and then Jacom joined in, successfully warding off the evil face.

Suddenly I realized our day was over, as I looked at my watch and saw that it was approaching 4:45. We never got to take advantage of the face painters, and entertainment by the jugglers, but we had done what the children wanted and they had enjoyed their experience.

While walking back to the Quad, Jamom asked, "Can I sleep at the Haunted House tonight?" I told him it was not a good idea, but proposed that they instead come back next year. They both liked that suggestion.

Finally, I brought them back to their gathering area, where they compared their Halloween excursions with each other. I did the same upon going home.



Jacom is assisted by junior Paul Sugden and senior Josh Baker of the Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity while getting some his Halloween treats.



Margaret Feinberg

Jacom and Jamom have candy filched by the Demon Deacon. The twins were enchanted by the haunted house, balloon figures and of course the candy.

Students begin preparation for the big day months in advance

By ZACH EVERSON
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

To most people, Project Pumpkin is simply a day when university students take some time out of their busy schedules to help some underprivileged children have fun. That might have been true when it first began, but Project Pumpkin has now developed to the point that planning for the event begins a year in advance.

The numbers for Project Pumpkin are astounding: 57,000 pieces of candy, 10,000 prizes, 1,300 trick-or-treaters, 800 escorts and 3,700 total hours volunteered by students.

Project Pumpkin began six years ago. "It was started by a woman who lived in Johnson Hall," said junior Kate McKune, the student coordinator for Project Pumpkin, said. She and other students in her hall invited 40 local children to trick-or-treat in their dorm.

"It grew through the Volunteer Service Corps into the event that it is today," McKune said.

This year was the largest Project Pumpkin to date: 910 permission slips were received, but McKune estimates that an additional 400 kids showed up.

For the first time, the Quad was host to the event. In the past it was held on the south campus. An advantage of the change in location is that the quad provides a closed-in area, which helps keep the children away from traffic.

The quad also allowed for the greater involvement of Greek groups. "Being on the Quad, we trick-or-treated through the (Greek) towers and the two haunted houses were held in Greek lounges," McKune said.

As can be expected with such a large undertaking, many problems were encountered along the way. The most significant pertained to candy. A major donor from previous years elected not to contribute. "We went on a sort of hyperdrive with our candy committee to find donors," McKune said.

The crisis was solved when an alumnus, who manages a candy distribution factory and wishes to remain anonymous, contributed 49,000 pieces of candy Oct. 28. "He was able to get the attention of the upper-level management of many candy companies," said junior Matt Greenawalt, the co-chairman of the candy committee.

McKune added that they also had a lot of support from Greek groups and other organizations on campus that brought candy in on their own.

Just as important as candy are the student volunteers. "Last year, 3,700 volunteer hours were given," McKune said.

The way most students volunteer their time is as an escort. "We had about 650 escorts before the day started. By the end of the day I probably would guess that we had about maybe 750-800 different students escorting kids around," McKune said.

Escorts are selected throughout the fall. There are two escort training sessions to ensure that Project Pumpkin provides the children with safety as well as fun.

Students also are able to participate through the carnival. The carnival consists of various booths that are run by different student organizations. Those in charge make sure that all of the booths are different and safe.

Many different students are involved with Project Pumpkin. Gloria Whitmire-Knight, of the Stony Glen Housing Development, said, "I was amazed when I found out that so many people were involved in the project. I thought it was just

the sororities and fraternities. I love the enthusiasm the students have — it's great for the kids."

McKune added, "There was a good variety of student organizations. We feel really good about the way the campus gets involved and comes out to support Project Pumpkin. ... I know that there was at least one faculty departmental booth."

There are many ways in which the children are selected to participate. Many of the children who were selected participated last year. Others call up asking to be included. "As other people in the community find out about Project Pumpkin, they call and say 'I have this kind of kid here, how do we get involved?' If it's early enough in the process, we try and include them," McKune said.

All children need permission slips in order to participate. Those children's identification sheets have a star on them, which signifies that the children are not to be photographed. This is because some of the children have been removed from their parents and are residing at undisclosed locations. Keeping them out of pictures helps ensure their safety.

Most of the children who participate are underprivileged and live nearby. "A lot of them are from the high-density housing in Winston-Salem; a lot of them are in all day, day-care programs (while) some are in subsidized day-care programs. We have a lot from Salvation Army boys' and girls' clubs. Some are from after-school tutoring programs. We have some students



Wendy Coulson

Junior John Sena prepares treats outside of the Volunteer Service Corps office for over 1,000 children who came last Thursday. More than 50 percent of the student body took part in the preparation and the big day.

from the Children's Home and from places like Amos Cottage, where children live full-time," McKune said.

As one would expect, an enormous undertaking such as Project Pumpkin requires significant monetary contributions. Project Pumpkin is budgeted by the Volunteer Service Corps and the Student Budget Advisory Committee. As mentioned earlier, donations are vital to the success of Project Pumpkin. "Beyond those budgets, we really and truly run on donations," McKune said.

Balloons, candy and carnival prizes are the most common donations. The assistance provided by Physical Facilities is free. Lawrence Joel Memorial Coliseum donated two tents, in case it rained. "The campus community is really supportive," McKune said.

The largest cost is bussing the children to and from campus. The Forsyth County Schools donated seven busses and local charter companies offered six at a low cost. Ten vans were rented and the two university vans were also utilized.

Despite a total of 25 vehicles, multiple trips had to be made to bring the children to campus. "We had two shifts, with more kids coming in on the second one," said junior Emily Meyers, the co-chairwoman of the transportation committee.

Drivers for the busses were included in the donation. That was not the case for the vans, however. "We had to provide drivers for the vans. At the beginning of the week, that really was a small crisis, because the drivers have to either be 25 (years old) or 21 (years old) and Wake Forest van-trained," McKune said.

The residence hall directors and assistant hall directors provided a solution as they are required to be van-trained. Law students and student's parents also served as drivers, Meyers said.

A major addition to Project Pumpkin over past years was the increased involvement in an "agency plunge." "Different groups of students went into the agencies and made the trick-or-treat bags with the kids," McKune said. Of the 25 agencies that participated in Project Pumpkin, 20 had agency plunges.

Junior Courtney Smith, an agency escort and a member of the transportation committee, said of the agency plunge, "It was really important because it showed our commitment. It's not just a one-time shot, it means a lot more than that to us."

A new idea was the implementation of an agency escort person. This person visited the agency throughout the fall and became well acquainted with the children there. This liaison participated in the agency plunge, and even traveled with the driver to pick up the children on the day of the event.



Margaret Feinberg

Sophomore Shane Harris and Elizabeth Thalhimier give some children a new look using face paint. Many children had been transformed by the end of the day.



Wendy Coulson

Junior Amanda Pipkin applies makeup in preparation for her duties as a clown. The clowns entertained everyone with their great faces and tricks.