

# YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD



A pensive looking Frankenstein and a barn owl crying in the night were just two of the many elaborate designs on jack-o' lanterns at last year's Pumpkin Festival. The inaugural event had almost 400 pumpkin carvings on display and 1,000 visitors. There will be some new additions this year, including pumpkin sketches done by local personalities such as *Globe and Mail* columnist Christie Blatchford and CFRB 1010's Bill Carroll. The sketches will be auctioned off with the money being donated to charity.

## Wacko Jack-Os

Harbord Street extends Halloween

with jack-o' lanterns on All Saints' Day

BY MATT HO

On November 1, Harbord Street will light up with jack-o' lanterns for the second annual Pumpkin Festival from 5 - 6 p.m.

It all started when Tim Grant, a board member of the Harbord Village Residents' Association (HVRA), saw hundreds of jack-o' lanterns lit along the pathway of Sorauen Park while visiting friends.

"It was incredibly magical, tons of people came out, parents with their kids came out to look at them. It extended the joy of Halloween, but in addition it sort of created a community celebration," he said.

Grant was inspired and contacted Neil Wright, the president of the Harbord Street Business Improvement Area (HSBIA), to discuss making their own pumpkin festival. Wright was immediately sold on the idea.

"We want to keep it simple and we want to do it for the kids. We also realized that young people, on Halloween, after that event is kind of a let-down. You've built yourself up, you've had your costumes, carved your pumpkin and then you wake up and it's all finished. We figured this would be a way of just finalizing it," he said.

Both Grant and Wright started to gather volunteers and the result was a visually stunning night.

A total of 369 pumpkins were on display and close to 1,000 people

showed up into the evening. Even restaurants participated by serving pumpkin soup and pumpkin fritters for free.

The success came as a surprise considering it was just the first year.

"People literally stopped their cars, got out and took photographs" — Tim Grant, festival organizer

"We worried initially that we couldn't get the street lights to turn off and get the streets closed, but in the end neither of those things mattered. The traffic almost stopped anyway because people literally stopped their cars, got out, and took photographs," said Grant. "We had every media center in Toronto here, City Television—of course the *Annex Gleaner* covered us, we had CTV camera crews down here," Wright said.

One new addition to the festival is a silent auction of pumpkin sketches done by local celebrities with proceeds going to Sick Kids hospital.

Some of the celebrities include Olympic star Colin Russell, *Globe and Mail* columnist Christie Blatchford, and CFRB personality Bill Carroll.

Of course, the main spectacle will be the pumpkins themselves. When asked which pumpkin designs were most memorable, Grant and Wright had similar answers.

"The ones that stuck with me were the faces of Mona Lisa, Paul Newman, Barack Obama, and Sarah Palin," said Grant.

For Wright, it was an image of a movie star and a horror icon.

"Paul Newman had passed away just before Halloween. Somebody had taken this pumpkin and carved his face into the pumpkin but when it was lit you saw this magnificent Paul Newman smiling at you from across the street, it was pretty stunning," he said. "Another one that had a lot of horror to it and yet was very precise, was Jason."

With more publicity and the additional participation of neighbouring BIAs, this year's festival is expected to be even more successful.

"Rain or shine we're going to have fun on Sunday night on Harbord Street," said Wright.

*Those who want to volunteer for the festival can contact Neil Wright at 416-960-1698 ext. 35.*

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