

FROM THE PRINCIPAL – Lynn Main, Principal

I am often asked if I repeat any *Tuesday Bulletin* columns. The exchange mainly goes like this. “You sure do write a lot of those columns each year. I bet you have a whole lot that you can just copy over from year to year.” My response is pretty much the same each time. “No. I write almost every column from scratch. There are always so many new happenings at Lafayette that I rarely even want to repeat something from before.” So this year I thought, I wonder if I have any good old columns about Halloween. I was surprised to find out that what follows was originally written 9 years ago. So with a few small changes I am repeating a column this year and hope you understand.

I love this time of year in Washington. The cool, crisp weather is a welcome relief after the long summer of hazy, hot and humid forecasts. The wonderful colors of rust, red, orange, and yellow as the leaves change. Football games and the smell of smoke as fireplaces get relit. I miss burning leaves, but I guess that is one concession we need to make to reduce air pollution. Winter foods like chili and pot roast return to the menu. And as this week ends, the fun and fantasy of Halloween.

I remember Halloween being a big deal when I was growing up. The hours spent making a costume. Anticipating an evening of trick-or-treating. Pumpkins to carve and what seemed like TONS of free candy to eat. My father always got dressed up as some sort of scary monster and loved to hide in the bushes and scare children as they came towards our front door. Fast forward twenty-five years and the same scenes replayed themselves, as my own children became a part of the action. Each year there were costumes to make, pumpkins to carve and TONS of candy. The annual Halloween parade at Bethesda Elementary. We didn’t have video recorders back then, but cameras with film that had to be taken to be developed were busy clicking that afternoon.

And now to the present and this Thursday at Lafayette. It’s the longest morning of the school year as we wait until we can metamorphose into all kinds of creatures after lunch in preparation for our annual Halloween parade. What a motley crew we will turn into as we march through Lafayette Park. Gypsies and vampires, fairies and Spiderman. Some particularly gruesome corpses in the 5th grade. Will you be able to figure out who your teacher is? Will all the early childhood staff come with some sort of unified theme? The air is highly charged as we struggle through our morning lessons.

What is it about Halloween? I think it is the idea that children get an opportunity to face their fears in a safe and protected manner. As gross and disgusting as some of the costumes will be, very few children are really scared. Teachers and even principals can dress up like old, ugly witches and get a great laugh from their students. Throughout the dark night of trick-or-treating, adults are always nearby to make sure you are safe as you ring your neighbors’ doorbells. The world is still a very scary place to children with monsters under the bed and in the closet. Certainly movies are much more graphic and visual. I remember a scary hand. Now children get to see the whole monster, several times over. Fairy tales still have big, bad wolves, wicked stepmothers, poisoned

apples, and fearsome dragons. Stories on the nightly news are no better. So as we finish this week, I remember the humorous Celtic blessing, "From ghoulies and ghosties and longleggedy beasties, and things that go bump in the night, Good Lord deliver us." For there will be a lot of them present on Friday, walking through Lafayette Park, laughing all the way. Hope to see you there, with your Smart phone or I Pad in hand. Happy Halloween!