

Commentary...

The new normal of holidays in Sisters

By **Edie Jones**
Columnist

How strange to have Halloween happen without the traditional celebrations special to Sisters. One of the highlights of the fall for my deceased husband, Ted, was to volunteer as a Rotarian at the annual parade on Cascade Avenue. He so enjoyed watching merchants and friends, dressed in costume as they greeted kids “trick or treating.” How sad it had to be canceled along with the fun celebration at the fire station.

It is unfortunate that they were canceled, as those events allowed young and old to dress-up, pretend they were something or someone different, and possibly forget the trials of the day. At a time when our entire world needs to be cheered up, Halloween could have been a wonderful antidote for the coronavirus.

Without traditional ways to celebrate holidays, creativity needs to come into play. This year, that is especially true. What new ways can we celebrate and keep (or develop) new traditions?

Thinking back to Halloween, pumpkins of course come to mind. Stores still have plenty available (probably at a reduced cost) and carving can still

take place (or drawn on by younger hands). Maybe a contest can emerge for the scariest, funniest, or most beautiful pumpkin. Be sure there are as many (or more) categories as you have kids and adults so everyone can receive a special treat for winning. Don’t forget, the insides make wonderful pies, which kids can help make. And, the seeds can be dried and seasoned as delicious, healthy treats.

How about a dinner that pretends Halloween is still here. Serve all kinds of “horrible” things like the guts of an outer space creature (spaghetti noodles), their blood (the spaghetti sauce), and eyes of an all-seeing bat (peas). Hot apple cider could be the liquor of goodness we all need to get through a scary winter and ice cream with chocolate sauce can be a way to bury every thing we don’t like in mud. Have everyone yell out what it is they most dislike as they pour on the sauce. Probably there needs to be a rule that family members can not be the chosen item.

Winter is a great time for telling ghost stories. Don’t worry if you’re not a storyteller, your kids can help you.

Sit in a circle on the floor as if you are sitting around a campfire. Place a light in

the center to simulate the fire (better yet, light up an actual fireplace and turn off all of the lights). Somebody needs to start the story, continuing until they say “and.” When that happens the story passes to the next person until they also say “and.” The story continues to pass in the same manner until a conclusion is obvious or everyone cracks-up laughing over the hilarious tale that has developed.

I’m sure many more ideas might come to mind. Have your kids get involved creating fun activities that will carry you through the entire winter. Pretend you are at summer camp and come up with exciting, rambunctious events that involve the entire family.

Young kids don’t need an excuse to get dressed up. Sometimes older siblings and adults need an excuse. Turn one day a month into another “Halloween” (or other time needing costumes) and relax in the fun of pretending and forgetting.

As we get near Thanksgiving, plans for not getting together with extended family are underway for many. That’s certainly happening in mine. What can we do to alleviate the inevitable sadness that will accompany this special day?

As a starter, kids might be

able to decorate paper placemats for those who won’t be around your table. Place them in a manila envelope (be sure to measure both ahead of time so you don’t have to bend them) and mail them to whoever will be missed. This is a great way to connect your kids with others important to the family.

Growing up in a family that was scattered from coast to coast, we always had a Bayberry candle burning during our holiday dinners. The families in other parts of the country were doing the same. That way we knew everyone was thinking of and giving thanks for all of those we loved and who loved us.

Of course, there are holiday dishes that bring forth family. Don’t neglect them, they are important. For years I tried to serve a special corn casserole that always appeared on my childhood holiday dinner

tables. Unfortunately, neither my husband nor my kids thought it very outstanding, and I stopped fixing it. Years later, while attending a dinner with my family of origin, it appeared. What a surprise and a delight. I had forgotten how much I enjoyed it. Perhaps this year, with my gathering being just my son and me, I’ll fix it. If he doesn’t partake, there will be lots left over for me!

As it gets closer to December and the many religious holidays celebrated during that month, I will write suggestions to bring separated families together. I’d love this to be collaborative. Anyone wanting to contribute to that column please email me at edie@together-for-children.com. Be sure to put “Holiday Ideas” in the subject line so I won’t miss it. Please send by December 4 so we can get them in the paper in a timely manner.

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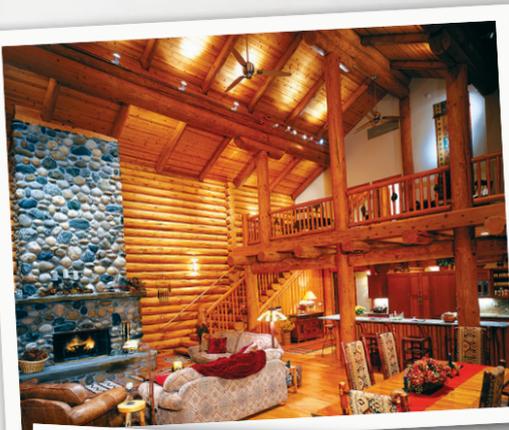
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