

Dispelling the Myths

Cauldron of Changes
removes the shroud of
misconception that often
surrounds non-traditional
believers

By Sara Jarrett
Oregon Daily Emerald

Around this time every year, they creep out of their little hovels with a black cat in tow, leaving their cauldron to boil in anticipation of young, scrumptious trick-or-treaters. Their scraggly gray hair flows beneath a perfectly pointed black hat, framing the huge wart that protrudes from the tip of their crooked nose.

This image of witches couldn't be farther from the truth, said Teri Ciacchi and Becca Perry, who both call themselves witches and are organizers for Cauldron of Changes, a local non-profit group dedicated to creating public events for area Pagans, Wiccans and Earth Worshipers.

They don't have green warts and they don't just come out just for Halloween. With some minor Internet searching, one can find out that Wiccans are not the evil characters Holly-

wood portrays them as. Bits and pieces of the ancient beliefs and practices of the Celts are being pieced together by modern Druids.

Modern day followers still celebrate a series of fire-festivals on the first of November, February, May, and August as well as Full Moon Rituals every month. The holiday that corresponds with Halloween is called Samhain. This is literally the end of the warm season, and falls on Nov. 1. It is said that this fire festival was adopted by the Christians as All Soul's Eve, and later became the secular holiday Halloween.

The occasion is a combined Feast of the Dead and New Year's Day for the Celtic calendar, marking "a time when the veil between our reality and that of the Otherworld is most easily penetrated," according to a web page. The Otherworld is the place where life continues after death. To the ancient Druids,

after a person dies in the Otherworld, their soul lives again in another human body.

Ciacchi explained the holiday on Nov. 1 as celebrating a journey inward toward self-knowing, which centers on the complex relationship between ecstasy and sacrifice. The fifth annual Witches' Ball sponsored by the Cauldron of Changes, to be held at the WOW Hall on Oct. 30, commemorates this journey.

The event will include a faux ritual that has no real precedence, Ciacchi said, though it will explore three aspects of the Greek deities Hecate and Dionysus. The myth surrounding these Gods includes ecstasy, jealousy and revenge.

The myth teaches that "the need for ecstasy and divine contacts overrides our rational selves," Ciacchi said. "If

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Deadline Wednesday, October 27
Published Friday, October 29

**Oregon Daily
Emerald**