

Photos by Bill Miller

Jaycoo jury selects Halloween designs.



If you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

Small-town merchants have long recognized the wisdom in this maxim, especially at Halloween time. It was an old American custom among youths of a generation ago to wax store windows on and before Oct. 31. The reasons were lost in antiquity, but the horrible results were evident in thick, incongruous patterns on and after Nov. 1.

All this has changed (mostly, anyway). One bright day, a bright merchant said to himself, "If they're going to draw, why don't they draw something pretty?" So he painted a sign of his own: "Free candy to the best artist." Besides inheriting one of the best-looking waxed windows in town, he started a trend. Now nearly everybody's doing it, and it's all very organized.

In Riverside, Ill., for instance, junior-high-school students submit ideas for artwork several weeks in advance of Halloween. A jury selects the best ones, and the young artists are assigned certain windows. Cash prizes are awarded the winners in the community-wide contest. Some of the artwork, and some of the effort behind it, is pictured here.



In this promising sketch, girls prove that it isn't hard to be both scary and funny.



Old legends and myths spark the lively imagination of the artistic students.



There's nothing like a coffee break to aid in the pursuit of the artistic life.



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