

A Smiley Halloween Party

by Dawn Shimura

Last year, our parent-operated Smiley English EFL for kids group (see *S&L spring 2003*) hosted a Halloween party for the children in our town. It was a humble success, and we have been asked to host the party again this year in cooperation with another village group. We began planning in April, but most of our work started in September, and ended the week after the party, in early November. It may sound like a lot of work, but with so many people organizing and contributing, perhaps the hardest part was making our own costumes.

The 15 mothers began organizing the Halloween party at our April monthly meeting. In May, some members of the group began growing pumpkins. In September, ideas were gathered, the party date was set, and Halloween goods were ordered. In October, more detailed activity plans were created. Progress and changes were discussed briefly before, during, and after each Smiley class. A flyer was circulated around the immediate neighborhood to explain Halloween and our plans, along with a request for neighbors to participate in contributing and passing out treats to the trick-or-treaters. The ten families willing to participate were given bandanas to tie on their doors the day of the party to signal that they were "open for business". The neighbors were also invited to the party, with no registration required. The day before the party, the mothers gathered together, decorated, set up the games, washed rice, cut jack-o'-lantern face parts from dried seaweed, and assigned responsibilities to each person for the next day's activities.

Trick-or-treating

We met together on a Saturday at 9:30 in the morning. Most kids came in costumes, and the few that came without costumes were helped into one of our last minute specials (angels made from white garbage bags and

aluminum-wrapped hanger wings, or ninjas made from black garbage bags and duct-taped, empty aluminum-foil-roll nunchucks). The participants were checked in and given bat-, skeleton-, ghost- or cat-coded nametags and bags. The trick-or-treating procedures were explained, and we were off.

Since the number of kids who showed up for the party (40) was about double what we had originally planned for, the group was split into two so as not to overwhelm the people behind the doors. The ghost and black cat groups went to the first house, the bat and skeleton groups went to the second house, then the ghost and black cats went to the third house, and so on. As we walked up to the first house we yelled, "Trick or treat-e-e-e-t!". When the door was opened, we yelled one more time. Since the neighbors weren't quite sure what to do with the candy they had prepared, one of the mothers explained that the kids would open their bags, and they should just drop it in. Since this was new to them, many people looked confused, most smiled, and the kids said a nice "Thank you" and "See you" as they left. It was a beautiful day, and the kids had a great time.

Jack o'lanterns

The trick-or-treating lasted about one hour, and we returned to the community center at about 11:00 for some games and lunch. When we entered the party area, about 5 fathers had already started carving the 10 pumpkins that had been donated. One of the pumpkins was so big that we needed an electric saw to cut it. Although it was their first time (my husband excluded), the jack-o'-lanterns turned out wonderfully, and the young boys especially enjoyed watching the process.

Games

While the fathers were finishing up the carving, the games began. The kids

were split into 4 groups of about 10 children each. A different mother had been put in charge of each game, ensuring a smooth flow from game to game.

Our first game was the donut-bobbing game. Plastic-wrapped donuts, one for each student, were hung on newspaper strips from four laundry poles. The parents held up one pole at a time and the first group ran toward the donuts on cue. They pulled a donut down from the pole without using their hands. The game continued with the next pole. All the kids, ranging in age from 3 to 10, seemed to have fun.

For the next game, four fathers joined us, and each father stood in front of one of four groups. One by one, the kids took turns wrapping up a father in toilet paper to look like a mummy. Each child wrapped until the count of 10 and then passed the toilet paper to the next person. The best-looking mummy won (voting by applause), and then we raced to unwrap.

The final game was apple bobbing; because we live in Aomori, apple country, this was a must. The game involves a large pot or tub of water and floating apples, from which the player removes an apple without using his or her hands. This was tough for the little children, but it gave us all a few laughs.

Following these games were a few fill-in activities to do while the adults set up the lunch tables. Using some big, flat boxes that a new desk had been delivered in, a large maze had been made in advance using cardboard pieces, staples, and duct tape. A hole was cut at the end of the maze, and the box was decorated with Halloween characters. To play, four people held the sides of the box and a ball was dropped in at the start. By lifting, lowering, and tilting the box, the ball was manipulated through the maze and then out through the hole. A couple of Halloween tic-tac-toe games were also printed out and enlarged for the kids to play (see:

www.kidsdomain.com). After playing these games for a while, we watched a couple of video clips about Halloween.

Lunch

By this time lunch was ready. We made a simple toast and began eating. Lunch was great. The neighborhood older-adults group had offered to make orange rice ball pumpkins for us, complete with Halloween faces. They used carrot juice instead of water to cook the rice, and mixed in pumpkin and other flavors to create cute and tasty Halloween rice balls. The other mothers made regular white rice balls with Jack o' lantern faces, pumpkin muffins, brownie- and quick-bread-filled Halloween gift bags and quiche. We also had some food items delivered to eat with the rice. Of course drinks and food were spilled (which we promptly wiped up with mummy toilet paper), but the lunch was enjoyed by all.

Finishing Up

Once the kids finished eating, they went back to playing the maze and tic-tac-toe games while the adults quickly cleaned up the lunch leftovers. The children and adults voted for their favorite boy's and girl's costumes. The votes were counted, and we had a tie for first in the boy's category. We only had two big certificates printed out for the winners, but fortunately we had other smaller ones available so we were able to make a quick substitution. Certificates were handed out to the three children with the best costumes, to each of the four winners in the donut games and apple bobbing games (because there were four groups), and to the father whose team won in the mummy toilet paper game. As the kids left the party, they each took home a Halloween activity worksheet (see: www.benjerry.com/halloween), and a Halloween gift bag.

Finally, since about 35 friends and neighbors who do not usually attend our classes also came to the Halloween party, we had another little private party just for our class mem-

bers at the next regular class. We wore our costumes again, watched videos of the party, shared pictures, indulged in leftover candy and drinks, and played the maze game until it was too smashed to play anymore. It was a Smiley Halloween!

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Trick or treat-e-e-e-t!



The dads carving the pumpkins.



Apple bobbing in Aomori.