



COURTESY PHOTO

The Bar Association in downtown Fort Myers has the right spirit this year.

## HALLOWEEN

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an adrenalin thing.”

Spooktacular is free, with early buzz created by an autumnal cornucopia of ghoulish events, all headlined by a concert by Hollywood starlet Juliette Lewis and her band, The Licks. “I wanted to have a big bash to help all the local businesses,” Ms. Sanzari said.

The ancient Celts believed the dead returned to earth on the evening of Oct. 31, during a supernatural interim dividing the warmer days and the cold, dark ones.

It was the tribal society’s biggest celebration of the year, a day to prepare for the winter months by stockpiling food and offering sacrificial animals and vegetables to their Gods.

They wore masks to avoid being recognized by ghosts, demons and other spirits that haunted that night. And they left food outside their doors to keep the returning dead from entering.

Catholic missionaries from England began to convert the Celtic people and transform the Samhain festival in the first millennium A.D. In an effort to make the transition to Christianity smoother, Catholic leaders attempted to align their own holidays with Samhain, setting All Saints Day for Nov. 1. All Saints Day was also known as All Hallows, meaning sanctified or holy. And Oct. 31 is All Hallows Eve, or Halloween, on Old English word.

But the Christian holiday didn’t satisfy the natives.

“The powerful symbolism of the traveling dead was too strong, and perhaps too basic to the human psyche, to be satisfied with the new, more abstract Catholic feast honoring saints,” wrote Jack Santino, in an essay for The American Folklife Center at The Library of Congress.

To shore up the stubborn beliefs, another Catholic holiday — All Souls Day, to honor the dead — was set for Nov. 2.

Still, the Celtic traditions persisted — that the dead came back on Oct. 31, on All Hallows Eve, as it was; that you should dress in masks to avoid being haunted and should placate dead visitors with food.

Different countries including England, Ireland, Wales and Scotland — all places where original Celtic people lived — found their own meanings and traditions with which to celebrate Halloween. In some ways, it was as much a celebration of young love or marriage

as it was of death and darkness. Some of the old Celtic stories that took place around Halloween were about things like triumphant love; in one tale, childhood lovers overcome parental disapproval, turn into swans and fly away.

Robert Burns’ famous poem “Hallowe’en” also helped popularize the holiday. It was an account of romantic interludes, games and parties that happened on Halloween among English peasants in the late 1700s.

Halloween also kicked off annual sporting events for some Englishmen of Burns’ time. After the seasonal slaughter, “local lads” used the dead animals’ dried out bladders for ball games, “inaugurating the beginning of the football season when rival villages, or rival ends of the same village, would try to rough and tumble their way to victory.”

Halloween is not linked to Satanism, although Christian missionaries considered Celtic practices pagan. (And in 1982, Rev. Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Coalition, called Halloween a “satanic ritual.”)

Many incidents, traditions and myths run together to make up the Halloween about to be celebrated in North America. In parts of Europe, a practice called “souling” resembled trick-or-treating. People went door-to-door asking for food in return for prayers. The “soulers” carried a hollowed-out turnip with a candle in it, representing a soul in purgatory. It was also a way for the poor to get food from the wealthy before winter’s arrival.

### American spooks and youths

At Space 39, an art gallery in downtown Fort Myers, the Dark Art show is a disturbing collection of grotesque, absurd and deranged art. Edgar Allan Poe would be proud. In choosing the works, gallery owner Terry Tincher said, “We were looking for something that wasn’t pretty.” The Dark Art show will be on display at Space 39 until Nov. 1.

It’s easy to imagine the reaction New England Protestants who settled America would have had to the show. They would have shunned the Dark Art works, as they did Halloween. The holiday went underground in North America, scarcely kept alive by Irish and Scottish immigrants who still exchanged scary poetry, wore costumes and partied in the streets on Oct. 31

But by 1890, more than two million Irish men and women lived in North America, then the largest ethnic group. In rural counties and in poor, working-class neighborhoods of growing cities, the spirit of Halloween was revived.

“Halloween gave a broad range of

## Fort Myers Halloween Events

**Spooktacular 2008** in downtown Fort Myers River District, Oct. 31, from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. Events include, but are not limited to (a small fee may apply to some):

The Gruesome Graveyard in the Patio De Leon, by Roger Mercado and Stacey Tripp, who will be sacrificed at midnight with no mercy.

Creepy Creatures at the Calusa Nature Center: scary snakes, alarming alligators and a bunch of demented zookeepers.

The Haunted Construction Maze. See how scary downtown construction is, hosted by Kraft Construction. All ages.

The Historical Haunted Walking Tour, commencing at 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. at the Southwest Florida Museum of History, and sponsored by Southwest Florida Paranormal Investigations (call 321-7430 for reservations).

Harrowing Horse & Carriage Rides, by Charlene’s Classic Carriages.

Communication from beyond, psychic readings at The French Connection by Maria at Many Blessings. Upstairs only.

A Haunted House from 7 to 9 p.m. at Venu.

Scare Zones, by Hide-A-Way Sports Bar and Salon Nicholas. Repulsive zombies will get in your way. Come armed with beer money.

Trick or Treat Stations from 7 to 9 p.m., at locals such as Orion Bank, Potomac Bead, April’s Eatery and others.

The Vampire Blood Drive, at the Lee Memorial Blood Center; look for the mobile bus. Vampires will suck your blood to replenish the area’s blood supply. Treats and prizes for participants.

Juliette and The Licks in concert. Patrick Jerome & the Jam open the show, with the music starting at 8 p.m.

Harry Chapin Food Bank will be accepting donations. Visit [harrychapinfoodbank.org](http://harrychapinfoodbank.org) for more information.

Purchase a VIP toe tag to sponsor the event. Packages cost \$200 and include two passes for the VIP concert viewing area and two passes to the VIP after-party at Spirits of Bacchus. Single sponsorships are \$100. All proceeds go to Spooktacular event budget.

Call 337-BROW for more information or visit one of the sponsors: Bennets Fresh Roast Coffee, Browtopia, Cella Molnar & Associates, Delicious Things, H2, Holiday Inn Historic Downtown, Space 39, Spirits of Bacchus and The Cigar Bar.

people the opportunity to reclaim the city streets, however temporarily...” wrote Nicholas Rogers in the book “Halloween: from Pagan Ritual to Party Night,” “... and to represent the marginal, the unorthodox, and, above all, the wild energy of youth.”

It was also known for being a night when youths pulled pranks and even vandalized neighborhoods. Common incidents included dug-up flower gardens, cars set on fire, trash cans toppled and signs ripped out of the ground. Police and law enforcement often handled such acts with a boys-will-be-boys sense of tolerance, and vandals were prosecuted with a light hand.

At the Chicago World’s Fair in 1934, which ended on Oct. 31, “some 300,000 revelers, some of them masked as witches, took complete control of 32 miles of streets and concessions, and ‘drank everything in

**Ricochet Halloween Cat Country 107.1 Boo Bash**, Oct. 31. First prize wins \$500 and a pair of concert tickets at the country themed dance club. Second prize — and Sexiest prize — both win \$100 and concert tickets. Doors open at 7 p.m. and ladies drink free all night, except shots. Guys pay \$3 and ladies \$5. Call 277-5700. 3853 Cleveland Ave.

**Halloween Costume Party at Cin-Cin**, a Mediterranean Bar & Grill, Oct. 31. Judging at 11p.m. with cash prizes for best costume and gift certificates for runners up. Call 415-2007. Corner of Cypress Lake Drive and McGregor Boulevard.

**Halloween Costume contest on the Murder Mystery Train**, Oct. 29-31. Award in each car! Call 275-8487.

**Kids Halloween Boo Bash ’08, Thursday**, Oct. 30, 5 to 9 p.m. at Gulf Coast Town Center. There will be a costume contest and trick or treating.

**The Edison’s 1st Annual Halloween Masquerade Ball**, Oct. 31. Look for \$1,000 in cash and prizes. An 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. half-price happy hour on house cocktails, wine and draft beer. “Hightide” performs live and costumes are welcome but not required. Call 936-9348. Overlooking the Fort Myers country club on McGregor Boulevard.

**Halloween Parking Lot Party at Reserve Cigar and Wine Bar**, Oct. 31 starting at 5 p.m. Heinous...Disturbing...Vile...Disgusting...Gruesome...Awesome. Look for drink specials, Soapy Tuna playing outside and a DJ inside. \$10 cover in costume; \$15 cover without. Call 210-0300. 10950 Cleveland Ave.

**Bistro 41 Annual Halloween Bash**, Thursday, Oct. 30. Starts at 9 p.m. at the patio and bar. Live music from The New Vinyl’s, wines from National Republic Distributing poured by hot celebrity bartenders. Appetizers by Reiner Drygala, and a midnight costume contest. \$25 per person. Call 466-4141. In the Bell Tower Shops.

**Fright Nights at the Haunted House**, Oct 23 to 31 at the Lee Civic Center. Gates open at 5 p.m. Ride through goblin filled woods for an additional \$2. Children’s games and live entertainment. Sponsored by the Lee County FairAssociation. Admission is \$8 for adults, \$4 for children 6 to 12, 5 and under Free. Call 543-8368. 11831 Bayshore Road. ■

sight except Lake Michigan.”

Eventually, local governments, newspapers and community groups such as Lions Clubs or churches tried to curb the pranks.

### Trick or treat

The idea of giving out candy also had ancient origins, but saying “trick-or-treat” was introduced around 1939. It’s an amusing threat when spoken by children in adorable costumes, and was intended to make Halloween seem less threatening.

“Trick-or-treating sought to marginalize adolescent pranking and to defuse the antagonism inherent in the festive tribute,” historian Mr. Rodgers wrote. “Children dressed up and unreflexively requested candies from local neighbors with little sense of what ‘tricking’ might mean.”