

Which way

witches?

Hundreds expected to get swept up in Witch Walk fun

to the

By Mike Crowley

MEADVILLE TRIBUNE

Your broom is fired up, your pointy-tipped hat is appropriately bent, your cauldron is bubbling — you're all set for the third annual Witch Walk in downtown Meadville.

But as you glide down Chestnut Street, it suddenly dawns on you: You forgot the skull you meant to bring — the good one — and you can picture it at home, right next to the eye of newt and toe of frog on the counter.

Not to worry! The Meadville Lions Club has you covered — and if you're in the market for a transportation upgrade, they can help you there, too.

"Every witch has to have their ride, so we are selling brooms tomorrow and we also have decorated skulls," said Mary Lynne Peters, the club's immediate past king lion. "They were a big hit last year."

Like the Lions Club skulls, the Witch Walk itself has been a big See WITCH, Page A5



Participants make their way across Chestnut Street during the 2024 Witch Walk. TOP: One display for the 2024 event featured a skeleton spewing a steady stream of liquids into a 'toxic waste' receptacle.

Meadville Tribune file photos

Witch

Continued from

hit since it took to the streets in 2023. Julie Panchura, the Meadville Independent Business Alliance member leading the event, said that the walk is expected to bring close to 500 people to the streets of downtown Meadville this evening, including about 300 who will purchase the \$30 or \$35 tickets that entitle them to a custom tote bag, free swag at each stop, contest entries and even a one-card tarot reading.

The spell that draws them has a lot to do with the time of year, according to Panchura.

“It’s the fall time of year — the weather starts getting a little cooler, the leaves start falling, everybody starts thinking about Halloween,” she said, “and everything just gets a little spookier. It’s just a fun event for people to get into the spirit of Halloween.”

Peters and her fellow lions will be very much in theme, though some will require less effort than others to fit in with the hundreds of Witch Walk participants.

“I don’t have to dress up, are you kidding me?” Peters said with a laugh. “I’m a witch any time. ... But we will be there in force tomorrow.”

Lions clubs across the country began selling brooms made by blind people nearly 90 years ago as part of the nonprofit’s support for the blind. Brooms for all sizes of witch will be available at the Witch Walk, and broom-buyers can even leave their purchases at the Lions Club booth for safekeeping until they’re ready to fly home.

“The Lions in this area are well known for their brooms,” Peters said. “What better event to publicize that we have brooms available?”

For those happy with their current brooms, there’s plenty more to keep witches and the witch-curious busy, including performances by fire dancers and the Eriebased band Midnight Frolic. Several food trucks will be present as well as Chestnut Street from Park Avenue to Mulberry Street and Market Street from Arch Street to the Market House will remain closed to traffic throughout the event.

It wouldn’t be a Witch Walk without an Edgar Allan Poe impersonator to put visitors in a fittingly sepulchral mood. At last year’s walk, the

Poe impersonator was heard to utter, “Nevermore!” more than once, but the author of “The Black Cat” and “The Raven” will once again be represented.

Also returning are the costume and cackle contests, both of which draw numerous competitors. The high shrieking fun begins at 6 p.m. in The Arc Community Greenspace with competitors aged 12 and under facing off first. Those 13 and older will follow at 6:30.

For those who plan to enter the witch-off, some honeyed tea might be in order. Crawford County, it seems, is rich in witch talent.

“It was very competitive last year,” Panchura said. “We had some really good cackles.”

Other highlights to spread the Halloween spirit include a black cat adoption event at Bark & Branch Pet Supply Co., 217 Chestnut St.

“Looking for a little Halloween magic? Come meet our adoptable black cats/ kittens,” the store said in an announcement. “Don’t worry, dog lovers, we’ll also have some adorable black dogs and puppies looking for their forever homes, too!”

Topping off the evening, the premiere of “The Addams Family” will hit the Academy Theatre stage at 7:30. The theatre is participating in the Witch Walk for the first time, according to administrator Darrel Whitney, and will be raffling off season tickets and handing out candy before the show.

The musical stage version of the beloved TV show and movie series fits nicely with the event theme, Whitney noted.

“One hundred percent — spooky, ooky and kooky,” he said. “All those things.”

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