

Pointers For Parents

Halloween Birthdays—Having A Ghoulishly Good Time

(NAPSA)—Call it the gift from party-planning heaven. While other parents rack their brains trying to come up with a theme for their kids' birthdays, the toughest question facing those with children born in October—Halloween time—could be just how much fun are they looking to scare up?

There's no question that, for a Halloween birthday, decorating is a must. Spider webbing, black light-bulbs and a CD filled with spooky music sets an eerie scene, while two old outfits stuffed with straw or newspaper—and topped off with pumpkin heads—are the perfect greeters for little boys and *ghouls*.

Still, if you find yourself short on ideas, you can always check out online services like the Party City Birthday Club at www.partycity.com/birthdayclub. The Web site provides innovative themes, fun activities and tips for creating unique and memorable birthday parties. Some of its Halloween-specific ideas include:

- Halloween candy is always a treat, but if you're trying to steer clear of sugar, fill goodie bags with other kinds of party favors like Halloween stickers, pencils, glow sticks and mini flashlights for the big night.

- Get your child involved by helping him create cool invitations. Cut out bats from black construction paper and write all the party invites on the bat, using



So SIMPLE IT'S SCARY—Following a few tips can help parents create spooky—and fun—Halloween-themed birthday parties.

white crayon or colored pencil. Outline the invites with craft glue and glitter to make them even more bewitching.

- For frighteningly good fun, let kids design their own jack-o'-lanterns. Pick up a small pumpkin for each guest along with some brightly colored, washable paint. Supply paintbrushes, cotton swabs and sponges and let the kids' imaginations go to work.

As a final tip, give guests the heebie-jeebies with a Halloween obstacle course. Send little goblins through a graveyard (filled with cardboard gravestones), a "Maniac Maze" (a simple cornstalk maze), or under the "Witch's Hair" (long strands of hanging wet yarn). Meet them at the other end with birthday cake for all.

For more fun tips, visit www.partycity.com/birthdayclub.