

# The Pumpkin Patch, an Orinda Tradition

By Lee Borrowman

It just wouldn't be October without it. Since 1973, the Del Rey Elementary School Pumpkin Patch has been the favorite place to purchase those jack-o-lantern wanna-be's. This year's Pumpkin Patch will be held on Saturday, October 13, from 12:00-3:00 at Del Rey, 25 Camino Moraga. The admission fee of \$7.50/person gets you all of the fun and games.

The Pumpkin Patch was not always the extravaganza it is today. Its origins were far more humble. Peggy Manrique, veteran Pumpkin Patch Coordinator, explains: "In 1973, the Pease family, who had children at Del Rey, donated some pumpkins from their small ranch in Napa County. The pumpkins were sold as a fundraiser. From 1973-1987, they donated the pumpkins to the school and Pumpkin patch was just that – pumpkins for sale.

Over the years, Pumpkin Patch evolved. Manrique continues, "The idea to have a family get together in conjunction with the pumpkin sales came about in the early 1980's and a small group of families attended a Thursday evening Ice Cream So-



Giant Slide



Julia Gomes, Pumpkin Patch 2006

cial. The following year, they added some games and pizza and it was a smashing success. The principal at that time, Rita Wolneck, asked organizer Diana Hood if she would be willing to run the event the following year. Diana responded 'Yes, if we can schedule it on a Saturday and expand it to a full-scale carnival-sized event.'

"The games at the first carnival weren't much different from those offered today," Manrique explains, "and included the Fishing Hole, Pinewood Derby, Cake Walk, Big Card Spin and of course, pumpkin sales. We have a bake sale that features delicious home made baked goods and a

Crazy Cake decorating contest. We've added a giant 90-foot inflatable slide and maze, and the 5th grade dunk tank. Prizes are awarded at most booths. This year, by popular demand, we are adding some booths especially for the younger crowd of future Del Rey students. Tempting treats and a BBQ lunch will be available for purchase."

Manrique has been the Pumpkin Patch Coordinator for three years. Now in her last year as Coordinator, she reflects on the unique nature of the event: "Pumpkin Patch has been the source of many fond memories for parents and students. It's not only an important part of our

fundraising efforts, it's great day of fun for the entire family. We all reflect on the good feeling that come from seeing families enjoying each other and their community in a good, old-fashioned home-spun environment. That's what makes Pumpkin Patch so special."

Pumpkin Patch raises about \$10,000 each year to support programs at the school that are funded entirely by the Parents' Club such as art, music, science and math in the garden. All of the work is done by volunteers, including student members of the "Others First" club at Orinda Intermediate School who come down to lend a hand.

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