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Handmade Costumes....a Real Halloween Treat

By Rosylyn Aragonas Stenzel



Left to right: Katie Millham (also sewing), Izzy Pauletich, Ruby Lowe, Adelaide Hurwitz, Alyssa Kisner, Anya Weinstein, Victoria Wardley, Hannah Buck (sitting) Photos Peter Goldie

Halloween is upon us and for many there has been a trip to the store to find just the right costume. For some, there may be a last minute scramble to find a costume despite slim selections in the days leading up to Halloween. But for others, the start of autumn and the school year signal the beginning of designing and creating a unique costume by hand.

Busy young sewers at Sew Now in Lafayette started working on their costumes in early September. The project began with the girls, ranging from ages 9-13, designing and sketching an idea on paper, selecting fabrics and accessories, and then beginning sewing. The girls met once a week and with each stitch, their designs came to life until completion seven weeks later. At the final class, the girls modeled their creations.

Witches are common on Halloween night, but not these one-of-a-kind designs. These witches come in all different varieties including a good witch with a powder blue satin dress and hat, a woodland witch with a brown velvet cape and Batik dress, a witch with a pink spider and silver spider web embroidered on a black cape and an elegant witch with a blue sequenced gown and blue velour hat.

Other one-of-a-kind costumes designed by the girls are a Bumble Bee with a hooped A-Line dress complete with pom-pom antennas, a Pippi Longstocking denim dress with whimsical colorful patches and a hot pink fairy costume designed for a preschooler with a tutu, glittery wand and wings.

When asked why handmade sewn versus store bought, Sew Now owner Susan Goldie explains, "The benefit of having a handmade sewn costume is that it is an original. You get exactly what you design with customized fabric, special detailing - making it your own." When asked the same question, the girls enthusiastically agree. "When you make it, it's different, and it's more fun to sew it!" says 4th grader Katie Millham. Adds 4th grader Isabel Pauletich, "It's fun! You can't really get one perfect at the store and how you want it. Sometimes the costumes at the store are just dresses."

The girls at Sew Now were not the only ones busy making costumes in the past several weeks. Lafayette residents Pam Severson and Jeanne Turano are continuing on the family tradition of making homemade costumes.

Severson, who has two elementary school-age children, describes, "Well I did a lot of sewing as a child since my mom made all my costumes, and I have such fond memories of them. We have always made Chase's when he was young, but now he doesn't let me so now it's Kelsey's turn. My mom knit the scarf when she was here, and so it's two generations of sewing gals."

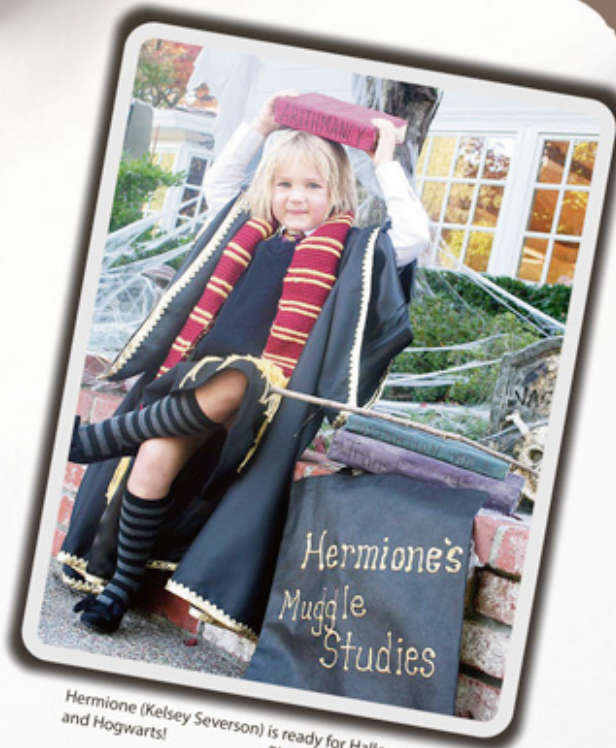
Severson just finished a Hermione Granger costume from Harry Potter for her five-year-old daughter Kelsey. The costume is complete with all the details including a Hogwarts patch, scarf in the Gryffindor stripes and colors, black robe, wand, and books with titles "Arithmancy," "Divination," and "Potions." They're still deciding whether to add Hedgewig the Owl or Crookshanks the Cat as another accessory.

Turano also enjoys working on the details in costume making. She has three boys and still makes costumes for the younger two in 4th and 7th grades. "I learned to sew when I was a child from my grandmother who was a seamstress. A lot of times when I make the boys costumes they're not as popular and not commercially available. You then have a really cool costume that is custom and all the other details that you can put in versus a store bought that is more basic."

Last year she made two Warrior Archer costumes each with a full-length cape, gold-trimmed tunic, artificial leather and chain mail armor and riveted helmet and gauntlets. The outfits are accessorized with a short sword, bow and arrow and quiver. Not to be left out, she made a matching costume for their dog Oreo, too. Turano continues to sew and is currently working on two Samurai outfits. The best part of the costume making, she says, is that her boys play with the costumes all year, long after Halloween.

For more information on sewing handmade costumes or other sewing projects, Sew Now is located at 960 Moraga Rd. in downtown Lafayette, 925/283-7396 or visit www.sewnow.com.

HALLOWEEN IN LAMORINDA



Hermione (Kelsey Severson) is ready for Halloween and Hogwarts!
Photo Pam Severson



Warrior Archers Matthew and Ryan Turano with their dog Oreo Photo Roslynn Aragones Stenzel



Graphics: Amanda Griggs

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