

CREATIVE FRIGHTS FOR A COVID-19 HALLOWEEN

Holiday activities are adapting to pandemic



Store shelves are stocked with candy, but should you prepare to hand out treats to the neighbor kids this Halloween? Here's how COVID-19 appears to be changing the holiday in a number of cities across America.

TRICK-OR-TREATING MAY BE REVERSED. Seventy percent of parents say they are seeking alternatives to taking their kids door-to-door, according to a Party City survey. A safer idea: drive-by trick-or-treating, in which neighborhoods organize parades for drivers to toss candy to costumed children waiting in their front yards.

YOU MAY SEE MORE DECOR. Chattanooga Ghost Tours in Tennessee will launch a neighborhood decorating contest as a way to celebrate. Families can walk or drive through neighborhoods and admire lawn displays and black-and-orange-decorated "Halloween trees."

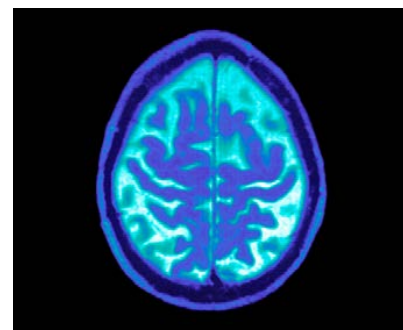
HAUNTED HOUSES ARE BEING REINVENTED. New drive-through experiences, such as Urban Legends Haunt in Costa Mesa, California, and the Haunted Road in Orlando, Florida, are safer from infection transmission.

DAY MAY BE THE NEW NIGHT. Apple orchards and pumpkin patches are gearing up for busy seasons; with lots of outdoor space, they lend themselves well to social distancing.

RETAIL BANKRUPTCIES GROW

We reported earlier this year on the first wave of retail bankruptcies wrought by the coronavirus, including J.C. Penney Co., Neiman Marcus Group, J. Crew Group and Hertz Global Holdings. Sadly, the number of retailers filing for bankruptcy protection continued throughout the summer, though many of these outlets continue to operate as the courts and creditors determine their future. Among the retail household names that have filed recently are:

- Brooks Brothers Group
- Ann Taylor and Lane Bryant (Ascena Retail Group)
- Jos. A. Bank and Men's Wearhouse (Tailored Brands)
- GNC Holdings
- Lord & Taylor
- Stein Mart



Faster Mental Decline for Boomers?

Boomers may be seeing a declining level of cognitive functioning compared with previous generations, which could put them at greater risk of dementia than their parents and grandparents, a new study found.

The research, published in the *Journals of Gerontology*, used data from 30,191 participants who took part in the University of Michigan's "Health and Retirement Study" between 1996 and 2014. People were asked to do things like count down by sevens and remember a group of words. This allowed researchers to measure cognitive function in those from the greatest generation (who came of age during World War II) to boomers. It turns out that cognitive functioning improved in those born between 1890 and 1923 to those born between 1942 and 1947, but declined significantly among boomers. In fact, many boomers started to show lower cognitive functioning as early as ages 50 to 54.

The likely reasons for the decline? Lower household wealth; less likelihood of marriage; higher levels of loneliness, depression and psychiatric problems; and an increase in cardiovascular risk factors such as obesity, physical inactivity and diabetes among boomers, according to study author Hui Zheng, an associate professor at Ohio State University. But Zheng says research suggests mental decline may be reversible with changes in individual behavior.



SOME MEDICAL TESTS MAY BE UNNECESSARY

To test or not to test? It's a quandary when you reach an age at which the procedures start to lose their value in predicting threats to your long-term health. That dilemma was underscored by researchers who found that at least half of older Americans took uncomfortable, unnecessary and potentially harmful tests to check for cancer past the age when those procedures were likely to be beneficial.

A new Pennsylvania State University study found that

74 percent of women over age 75 were unnecessarily tested for breast cancer and that 59 percent of men were needlessly screened for colorectal cancer.

The tests are considered unnecessary, according to the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, because the likelihood the patient can tolerate the treatment decreases while the odds of death from another cause increase. The bottom line: Talk with your doctor before undergoing "routine" screening tests, medical experts say.