

Feed kids' minds, not their cavities.
Give brain candy.



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Halloween Ideas: Give “Brain Candy” Instead of Sweets to Kids for Trick-or-Treat

San Jose, Calif., Sept. 9, 2012 - Rebecca Morgan of San José, CA has a vision to shift Halloween treats away from cavity-causing candy to something every kid – and parent – loves: Books.

Why books?

“Candy was fine when kids trick-or-treated on their block, yielding a few dozen candy pieces. Now, according to the California Milk Processors Board, the average Jack-O-Lantern bucket holds about 250 pieces of candy amounting to about 9,000 calories and about three pounds of sugar. This not only wrecks havoc with kids’ energy level and digestive systems, but it can contribute to cavities, obesity and diabetes,” said Morgan.

Morgan started Books For Treats in 2001 to begin to turn the tide from ever increasing candy to a treat that, as she says, “Feeds kids’ minds, not their cavities. Give brain candy.”

Morgan began offering books to her ghouls and goblins at her home in 1995. At her local library book sale she bought gently read children's books for about what she was spending on candy. She bought dozens of books covering toddlers to sixth grade, roughly sorted them by grade level and let her trick-or-treaters choose from among the books.

This movement has spread from her San José community to others around the US and Canada. Books For Treats was recently given non-profit status so tax-deductible donations can now be used to help spread the word and assist other communities in starting a Books For Treats event.

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She shares the kids' reaction: "Kids run to the curb waving their hard-cover treat, saying, 'How cool -- I got a book!' Parents help pick out their kid's book and the kids compare books with their friends and offer to swap when they were done with it. I'd never had a kid raising a candy bar, running to the sidewalk yelling about it. I knew I was on to something."

Some naysayers tell her that she is stealing the fun of Halloween and ruining kids' Halloween. "In fact, the contrary is true. Kids love books. Since they get to choose their book from the age-appropriate box, they are excited to have a treat that lasts more than a few seconds. I commonly hear, 'We made sure to come to the book-lady's house.'"

When asked what she thought of Books For Treats, seven-year-old Alana said, "I like books better than candy. A book lasts a long time and candy is gone in a bite! And I can sit on my daddy's lap and read the book over and over with him."

"You can thrill kids with gently read books that cost about the same -- or sometimes less -- than the candy you've been throwing in those Jack-O-Lanterns," Morgan says.

The Books For Treats website, www.BooksForTreats.org, has free downloadable step-by-step kits to help both residents and communities set up Books For Treats.