

NEWS

MEHER MONTESSORI SCHOOLS LETTER



323.724.0683

HOUSTON

Ages 2 1/2 - 12

Garden Harvest



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The child has a different relation to his environment from ours...the child absorbs it. The things he sees are not just remembered; they form part of his soul. He incarnates in himself all in the world about him that his eyes see and his ears hear.

—Maria Montessori
The Adolescent Mind



NEWS

► School Shirt Day

School Shirt Day is the last Friday of the Month. This month it is on Friday, October 25th. Please remember to remind your children to have 100% participation in their classroom.

► Pathfinder Ranch

The 3rd year children of Ms. Tenold's class and the children of Mr. Mindes' class will be at Pathfinder Ranch November 12–November 15!

► Costume Parade

Our annual Costume Parade will take place on Thursday, October 31st. The Primary children will have their parade from 8:30–8:45 a.m. The Elementary children will have their parade from 8:45–9:00 a.m. The children come to school in their costumes, and will change to regular clothes after the parade. Classes will have small afternoon celebrations.

► Daylight Saving Time

Daylight Saving Time 2018 ends Sunday, November 3, at 2 a.m. when the clocks fall back an hour.



Follow us on **Instagram**
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The graphic features a large camera icon on the left with the text "Meher MONTESSORI SCHOOLS" and "Insta" on it. To the right, there are three Instagram post thumbnails. Below the camera icon, the text "Follow us on Instagram meher_montessori_schools" is displayed in a white script font on a dark blue background. The bottom of the graphic shows a partial view of the Instagram app interface with navigation icons and post details like "14 likes" and "055 likes".



Glad to be back once again. Exciting events that have occurred in our classroom since the last newsletter. September has been swept away so quickly like magic and October pulled in instantly. Indeed time flies so fast and the children in our class are learning, adjusting and growing up rapidly! The younger children in our class are adjusting well and are interested and happy to come to school and learn. They have started to make friends, love to work in groups and most of all are developing their listening ears when lessons are given. They can sit longer and patiently during circle time. They are focused on developing and improving their large motor skills and maneuvering carefully inside the classroom. Older children are learning to share their own point of view especially when stories are read at circle time. They are a big help as they show the younger children the rules to follow in the classroom and are quick to volunteer in maintaining the order of materials and cleanliness in our prepared environment. Aside from being good role models in class, they are learning and improving their skills in math (addition, subtraction and chains skip counting). Their skills

in cursive writing are getting better each day. Reading is sharpened as they continue with some easy reading cards and phonograms.

We have four children who are October birthday celebrants, they are Salvador Gallardo who turned 4 years old, Joaquin Higa, Benjamin Zhang and Ellie Wong turned 3 years old; and last but not least, Henry Lahoda who turned 5 years old. Happy birthday to you all.

Our Fall Fundraiser has just ended and I would like to thank all our parents and children who participated and supported the event. Thank you for taking the time from your busy schedule to sell some items to your relatives, friends and co-workers. The amount raised in this event will be used to buy materials used in the classroom.

I would like to thank my students and their parents for having our first 100% School Shirt Day participation last September 27th. It was great to see all the children and staff wearing their school shirts on that day! A pizza party will be scheduled in class soon. May we continue to have another 100% School Shirt Day this Friday, October 25th. Watch for my flyer with this reminder soon!

Our Fire Drill was a success! The children were focused on following the rules of when and where to line up. Had my head counts and the children replied "here!" as their names were called out. Once clear, we walked back quietly to our classroom.

We had a good turnout of parents that attended our "Back to School Night!". Smiles, affirmative nods and laughter went around as we discussed important topics that concern their children and their studies. May we continue this great start to help our children better themselves in their studies.

Our "Picture Day" was beautiful. All the children came ready and excited to have their pictures taken. It went smoothly, orderly and what was great is the fact that the children waited patiently for the last child's picture to be taken! I am so proud of them. Public Open House and our First Friday Coffee was also a success. We had a very good turnout Saturday, October 12th for our Public Open House. Young parents with their children came to see our primary classrooms. They love the set up of our classrooms and questions asked were satisfactorily answered. I had the chance to see two of my former parents who enrolled the younger sibling. Our parents were excited for our First Friday Coffee! It is an informal gathering for parents to have the chance to meet other parents. You can bring your own mug to go too! Friday Coffee will occur every First Fridays of every month. Come join us once again Friday, November 1st from 7:00-8:30 am in the Church Lounge. Thank you so much Mrs. Munoz for introducing

"Friday Coffee" to all of us; it is truly one great opportunity to bond and socialize with all the parents in school.

Ms. Bayon keeps busy in class from 8:15 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. She sees that we are both on the same page in grace and courtesy with our children most especially in regards to their manners. Thank you so much once again Ms. Bayon for all that you do in class.

Halloween Costume Parade is on Thursday, October 31st at 8:30 am.

Have a safe and fun filled Halloween to one and all!

Mrs. Rivera
Ms. Bayon

"One test of the correctness of educational peace is the happiness of the child"

—Maria Montessori





The month of September went by so quickly. One month of the school year is officially done. Our children are fully settled and are busy with activities according to their interest and age. We also welcomed Dylan Chavez into our classroom.

Currently, all things Fall and Halloween surround our classroom walls. The children have been punching out pumpkins, ghosts, and candy corn with Mrs. Suh. The purpose of punching work is for the child to have control and coordination of their movement, develop muscular control, prepare them for other exercises in the classroom such as sewing and/or writing, and to care for their environment. It's great to see the children working with something purposeful and fun for them.

Birthdays celebrations this month are:

October 2: Claire Tsang who turned 3

October 3: Zayah Marzbani who turned 4

October 25: Daniel Rincon who turned 5.

Happy Birthday to them!

Our Back to School Night was September 26. Thank you to everyone who attended. It was a great way for all the new parents to meet returning parents and vice versa. Some topics discussed were, the importance of getting your child to school on time, the three-hour work period, and some activities that can be done at home that guide your child to independence. I have a few more copies of the list of activities for any parent that would want one. We also had a Public Open House on October 12. The children helped clean the classroom and tiding things up for the families visiting.

This month we had 2 practice emergency drills. On October 9th we practiced for our Fire Drill and October 17 we practiced for our earthquake drill (California Shake out Earthquake Drill). The children did great and were quick to get ready for cover and exit the classroom. Prior to the drills, we talked about the importance about being aware of our surroundings, leaving materials as they are, and lining up to quickly exit the classroom. The children quickly caught on and the drills went well.

It's exciting to say that our classroom got 100% participation on School Shirt Day for the month of September. This month School Shirt Day lands on the 25th. Let's get 100% participation again.

Lastly, our Halloween Parade will take place October 31st. Please bring your child to school on time as it happens shortly after class time begins. I want to give parents a reminder to pack extra clothes for your child so they can change once the parade is over.

Thank you,
Ms. Lopez and Mrs. Suh



**CONGRATULATIONS
MATEO AND PAOLO!**

**EAGLE EXCEL CHESS
TOURNAMENT 2019**

**AS A TEAM REPRESENTING
MEHER MONTESSORI
SCHOOL,
THEY WON 3RD PLACE.**

**INDIVIDUALLY,
MATEO WON 6TH AND
PAOLO WON 2ND PLACE!**

Class News

We celebrated three birthdays this month: Christian, who turned 7 on October 6, Patrick, who turned 7 on October 10, and Melissa, who turned 8 on October 14. In other class news, we had a pizza party together for winning 100% on School Shirt Day last month.

Curriculum News

Students work on some lessons that are tailored to their individual needs, and some lessons as a class. Here is a snapshot of the group activities we are doing in October:

Garden Harvest: This was our introduction to the Garden Harvest. Each month, our whole class spends time viewing the outdoor garden beds maintained by Mrs. Gonzalez and the third years. This was our first visit out there together for the year, so the third years explained what they had planted, showed their younger classmates what each plant looks like, and also gave them a taste of some of them (chives, mint, lettuce). Back inside, the gardeners also showed the class the spinach and carrot seeds they had planted and are starting from scratch. We had students guess how long it would take the seeds to sprout (some guessed months or a year), and then a week later, they sprouted!

Art:The art element we are focusing on this month is Shapes. Children will learn about the types of shapes in art (geometric and organic), shapes in nature, and shapes in art and design from history such as architecture or

in famous artwork. They also have time to practice the lessons as well as make their own artwork employing what they learned.

Read aloud: *Little Leap Forward* by Guo Yue and Clare Farrow, a historical fiction story about a boy in Beijing. Either I read this aloud to the class, or the third years take turns reading. We read one chapter a day, and then discuss it together afterwards.

Poem of the month: *An Arrow and a Song* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

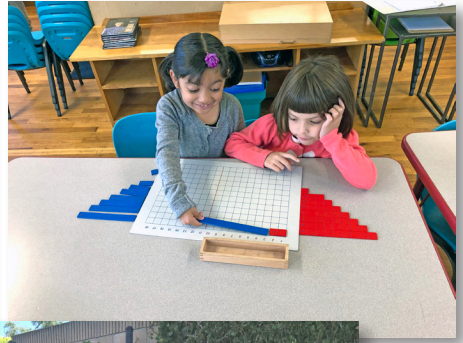
Next is an overview of the differentiated lessons students are learning and practicing this month: noun introductions, common/proper and singular plural nouns, sentence analysis, force & motion, vertebrates/invertebrates, long multiplication, layers of the Earth and layers of the atmosphere, addition and subtraction, and 3 states of matter.

Please remember to grab your child's Weekly Progress report from the Friday folders on the sign-in table if you'd like a detailed list of their lessons each week.

Calendar News

Students helped make our classroom neat and beautiful for the Public Open House on Saturday, October 12. We also participated in two safety drills, one fire drill and one earthquake drill (The Great California Shake-out!) Our next School Shirt Day is October 25. Halloween Parade is October 31!

READ ALOUD



**LOWER
ELEMENTARY
GARDEN**



THIRD YEARS SHOWING WHAT THEY HAD PLANTED





GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Hope this ghoulish month is finding everyone in good spirits! The students are excited for Halloween, or perhaps, the strong Santa Ana winds are especially animating them! Either way, the Upper Elementary students appear wildly happy and active!

Back to School Night

For those parents who were unable to attend Back to School Night, I want to share the topics we discussed. First, I put out a call for volunteers for the Pathfinder Ranch trip (we still need drivers and chaperones). Then, Anthony Alvarado, Francesca's father, and a chaperone at Pathfinder for three years, shared his very positive experience in that role, and enthusiastically encouraging anyone on the fence about volunteering to take the plunge! Next, I addressed the structure of the class in terms of academics, mentioning that this month (October) I planned to focus on math and language (grammar, text analysis, and reading comprehension). Afterwards, Ms. Espinoza (Ezio's

mother) spoke about her plans for the micro-economy class that she is migrating over from the Middle School. Her short presentation led to a conversation about business ideas that ranged from a class newspaper (in the works) to a repair business. And, finally, I mentioned that we are always looking for parents willing to share their skills and talents with the students, whether it be woodworking, sewing, sports ... anything! And, while I have your attention, if there are any parents willing to be a sort of classroom parent and help communicate activities and class needs (supplies, drivers, etc.) to other Upper Elementary parents that would be greatly appreciated.

Upcoming in November

Starting in November, the following parent-share classes will be starting: Ms. Espinoza's micro-economy class (mentioned previously), Michael Castillo's (Enzo's uncle) gardening/biology class, and, our most recently added class, Spanish, which Megdalena Cordoba (Rafaela's mother) will lead.

Class Notes

This month I have introduced the students to expository structures, such as compare and contrast, problem-solution, and other common text structures. The aim of text structure identification is to facilitate reading comprehension. I have also initiated summary writing, again to aid with reading comprehension and to introduce the students to a useful, and often used, skill in the higher grades.

In math, a range of topics are being worked on and discussed, as one would expect in a Montessori classroom; As a teacher, my goal is to know what students are comfortable with, so that they can be comfortably challenged.

Finally, I am very impressed with the adept manner that the students have started to plan and prepare for their Halloween party. Francesca and Ayushi volunteered to coordinate the festivities; they were immediately supported and joined by a very willing and eager cast of students. All the students have staked out their claim to work on one of three committees: food, decorations, and games. The holiday celebration will take place on Thursday, October 31 ... Halloween Day!



FIRST FRIDAY COFFEE MORNING

To all Meher parents and caregivers -
take a moment after drop-off for
coffee, tea, snacks and conversation.
Meet other parents and staff members.

Friday, November 1st
7:00 - 8:30 am

In The Church Multi-Purpose Room
Parents and Caregivers only please

Hello to all of our Meher Families. As is typical in Southern California, the calendar may say fall is here but the daily temperatures and Santa Ana winds don't call for sweaters and hot chocolate just yet. It will be nice when the cooler days and nights arrive and we start to see some color changes in nature around us.

Thanks you to those of you that stopped by on our first First Friday Coffee morning. I was so pleased with the turnout and really enjoyed watching parents meet other parents for the first time and the great conversations that took place. If you didn't make it last month, I hope to see you on Friday, November 1 between 7:00-8:30 am. If you can't stay, feel free to fill up your travel mug with our coffee or tea and grab a muffin.

Pictures have arrived and I love taking a few minutes to look at all of them. Highlight Photography does such a good job of capturing those beautiful faces. Your children look great in the photos and as a parent of three grown-ups, I can tell you that those photos will mean so much to you many years from now.

Our costume parade on Halloween morning is always a fun and joyful time for the children and families. Please be here early so as to get parking. We start promptly at 8:30 am with the primary classes and there is no parking allowed inside the school.

If there is anything that you need, please feel free to call me, email me or stop by my office any time. I am here at your service.

Peace and love to you all.
Adela Muñoz

"The things he sees are not just remembered;
they form a part of his soul."

—Maria Montessori

by Meghan Cox Gurdon

January 18, 2019

The Secret Power of the Children's Picture Book

Even infants get profound cognitive and behavioral benefits from sharing a vivid story

Millions of people—perhaps you're one of them—have watched viral videos of a Scottish granny collapsing in laughter while she reads to a baby. Comfortable on a sofa with her grandson, Janice Clark keeps cracking up as she tries to read "The Wonky Donkey" and, in a second video recorded a few months later, "I Need a New Bum."

Her raspy burr sounds great, and she's fun to watch, but the real genius of the scene is what's happening to the baby. Tucked beside her, he's totally enthralled by the book in her hands. In the second video especially, because he's older, you can see his eyes tracking the illustrations, widening in amazement each time that she



turns the page. He's guileless, unaware of the camera. He has eyes only for the pictures in the book.

What's happening to that baby is both obvious and a secret marvel. A grandmother is weeping with laughter as she reads a story, and her grandson is drinking it all in—that's obvious. The marvel is hidden inside the child's developing brain. There, the sound of her voice, the warmth of her nearness and, crucially, the sight of illustrations that stay still and allow him to gaze at will, all have the combined effect of engaging his deep cognitive networks.

Unbeknown to him and invisible to the viewer, there is connection and synchronization among the different domains of his brain: the cerebellum, the coral-shaped place at the base of the skull that's believed to support skill refinement; the default mode network, which is involved with internally directed processes such as introspection, creativity and self-awareness; the visual imagery network, which involves higher-order visual and memory areas and is the brain's means of seeing pictures in the mind's eye; the semantic network,

which is how the brain extracts the meaning of language; and the visual perception network, which supports the processing of visual stimuli.

And it is all happening exactly when it needs to happen, which is early. In the first year of life, an infant's brain doubles in size. By his second birthday, synapses are forming for language and many other higher cognitive functions. And by the time he's blowing out five candles on his birthday cake, today's viral-video infant celebrity will have passed through stages of development involving language, emotional control, vision, hearing and habitual ways of responding. The early experiences he's having, and the wiring and firing of neurons they produce, will help to create the architecture of his mind and lay the pathways for his future thought and imagination.

Leaving one particular Scottish baby aside, it is worth considering what cognitive and behavioral research can tell us about a baby's gaze and the dynamic power of the picture book. Clinicians at the Cincinnati Children's Reading and Literacy Discovery Center have been using MRI scanners to study these questions, and they've come up with a suitably fairy-tale phrase: The Goldilocks Effect.

For a small 2018 study involving 27 children around the age of 4, the researchers watched how the young brains responded to different stimuli. As with the first bowl of porridge that Goldilocks finds in the house of the Three Bears, the sound of the storytelling voice on its own seemed

to be "too cold" to get the children's brain networks to fully engage. Like the second bowl that Goldilocks samples, animation of the sort that children might see on a TV screen or tablet was "too hot." There is just too much going on, too quickly, for the children to be able to participate in what they were seeing. Small children's brains have no difficulty registering bright, fast-moving images, as experience teaches and MRI scanning confirms, but the giddy shock and awe of animation doesn't give them time to exercise their deeper cognitive faculties.

Babies look at adults to see where we're looking, so if we're glued to an electronic device, that's what will draw their gaze too.

Just as Goldilocks sighs with relief when she takes a spoonful from the third bowl of porridge and finds that it is "just right," so a small child can relax into the experience of being read a picture book. There is a bit of pleasurable challenge in making sense of what he's seeing and hearing. There is time to reflect on the story and to see its reverberations in his own life—a transaction that may be as simple as the flash of making a connection between a real donkey he once saw with the "honky tonky, winky wonky donkey" of Craig Smith's picture book. The collaborative engagement that a child brings to the experience is so vital and productive that reading aloud "stimulates optimal patterns of brain development," as a 2014 paper from the American Academy of Pediatrics put it, strengthening the

neural connections that will enable him to process more difficult and complex stories as he gets older.

Much of the hidden magic of reading aloud has to do with those curious eyes and that devouring gaze. Looking at a book with an adult, a child increases his capacity for “joint attention,” noticing what others see and following their gaze. This phenomenon has a remarkable tempering power in children. It encourages the development of executive function, an array of skills that includes the ability to remember details and to pay attention. Children “learn to naturally regulate their attention when they are focusing on a task they find interesting in a context that is nurturing, warm and responsive,” as Vanderbilt University’s David Dickenson and colleagues put it in a paper summarizing the rich developmental value of reading aloud.

By contrast, fast-paced TV shows have been shown to impair executive function in young children after as little as nine minutes of viewing. Nor is that the only tech-related downside. Babies look at adults to see where we’re looking, so if we’re glued to our electronic devices, that’s what will draw their gaze too. What they see may not be what we want them to see. As the psychologist Catherine Steiner-Adair has written: “Babies are often distressed when they look to their parent for a reassuring connection and discover the parent is distracted or uninterested. Studies show that they are especially perturbed by a mother’s ‘flat’ or emotionless expression, something we might once have

associated with a depressive caregiver but which now is eerily similar to the expressionless face we adopt when we stare down to text, stare away as we talk on our phones or stare into a screen as we go online.”

Given that parents and grandparents are going to spend some time using devices, it is all the more important to balance it out with times of intense engagement with babies and toddlers. Glancing down to catch a baby’s eye while reading a story, meeting a child’s inquiring gaze—these simple acts bring the child’s brain waves into greater synchronization with the adult’s, according to recent research at Cambridge University. Babies in the study made more vocalizations when they were in sync, suggestive of an early head-start in language. Reading picture books to them thus has a double effect: It removes the negative of extra screen time while adding a terrific positive in the form of skill- and brain-building effects. It’s a perfect way to ensure that babies and young children get what their eyes so benefit from seeing: wonderful pictures in books and the wonderful human face.

—Ms. Gurdon writes *The Journal’s* “Children’s Books” column. This essay is adapted from her new book *The Enchanted Hour: The Miraculous Power of Reading Aloud in the Age of Distraction*, published by Harper, an imprint of HarperCollins (which, like *The Wall Street Journal*, is owned by News Corp). ■



Fundraiser

October snuck up on us so quickly this year. We have already completed our Charleston Wrap fundraiser. We had over 50% participation this year. Thank you to all who chose to participate. For those who chose not to participate, that's ok! There are still other ways to show your support for our school. We are a Box Tops School. Download the app and take a photo of any qualifying receipt for money to go directly to the school. The new format is much easier than cutting and saving those little rectangles.

Additionally, the monthly Scholastic orders yield points for the school that I redeem to buy new books for the classroom. The flyers are placed on the coat rack monthly. Once again, our class code is PXY4L. And, finally, I do have a wishlist on Amazon titled Meher Montessori Altadena, for some extra materials, supplies, and daycare toys. If you have a hard time locating the wishlist, email me directly and I will forward a link to you. That method has worked out best for the families who have chosen to purchase off of Amazon for the school.

In The Classroom

The younger children are lengthening the ability to concentrate and focus, as well as developing strength in their wrist and refining their pincer grips through various Practical Life activities. The younger children are encouraged to work on spooning activities daily for these reasons. The older children are receiving more complex Practical Life lessons that require following multiple steps in a sequential order to yield the desired results. Some of those lessons are table washing, flower arranging, apple cutting, and care of plants.

Additionally, children of all ages continue to receive many lessons with the Sensorial materials, including extensions, distance games, and memory games. The Sensorial materials also help to develop further aesthetic refinement through grading and sorting materials by size, shape, color, touch, or sound.

The graduates are working on completing an activity in reading, writing, geography, math, as well as a specific fine motor skill, daily. The graduate children also have a monthly reading log to complete at home and return to the school.

School Shirt Day

The children all wore their School Shirt last month. 100% participation earned them a baking activity. Later in the month, we will bake a pumpkin cake. Because baking takes longer when the children do the scooping, pouring, mixing and egg cracking, and the recipe of the month needs time in the oven to bake and then cool, we must start our baking promptly at 8:15. This ensures that we can have the baked treat ready and on the snack table by 9:30. Because these days are very busy, children who arrive late will not have an opportunity to participate in the baking itself.

School Shirt Day for this month is Friday, October 25th. If all the children wear their shirts this month, next month we will bake apple muffins. Please help your child to remember to wear their school shirts on the last Friday of every month.

Halloween

On Thursday, October 31st, we will have a short costume parade. The parade will be held upstairs, in Upper Heicher Hall. The parade will be from 8:45-9:00am. Children may arrive at school in their costumes. Parents are welcome to come and take pictures. Please remember to send a complete change of clothes for children to wear once the parade is over. The children will also need to bring a grocery size, reusable bag on this day to collect all the end of month work and crafts. Also, make sure your child's costume pieces and their bags are all labeled with their names.

In the afternoon we will have a refreshment party for the children and staff only. A sign up for that went

out on the coat rack the week of the 14th. Children may bring goodie bags to pass out to their classmates. No candy or chocolates will be allowed.

Coffee Social

I want to thank the parents that joined me in the Founders' Room for our first coffee social on the 4th. As the first Friday in November is the day after Halloween, I have decided to postpone November's coffee social until the following Friday, the 7th, from 7:15-8:15am. I imagine getting overly tired kiddos up and ready for school the day after Halloween, in time to have coffee, might not work out well overall.

Next Month

As of press time, the class had not yet participated in The Great California Shakeout on October 17th. Look for details about that in next month's newsletter. Red Ribbon week will also be covered in November's newsletter.

On November 26th, we will have a Multicultural Potluck Luncheon for the children, the parents, and the staff. This is a big event where we invite parents to cook and share food from their culture. Families are welcome to attend and have lunch with us. More details for that will go out on the coat rack at the beginning of November.

Until Next Month,
Mrs. Wildhaber
Miss Tinajero, Miss McCray & Miss Sykes





HALLOWEEN SAFETY TIPS

Everyone loves a good scare on Halloween, but not when it comes to child safety. There are several easy and effective behaviors that parents can share with kids to help reduce their risk of injury.

Walk Safely

- Cross the street at corners, using traffic signals and crosswalks.
- Look left, right and left again when crossing and keep looking as you cross.
- Put electronic devices down and keep heads up and walk, don't run, across the street.
- Teach children to make eye contact with drivers before crossing in front of them.
- Always walk on sidewalks or paths. If there are no sidewalks, walk facing traffic as far to the left as possible. Children should walk on direct routes with the fewest street crossings.
- Watch for cars that are turning or backing up. Teach children to never dart out into the street or cross between parked cars.

Trick or Treating With an Adult

- Children under the age of 12 should not be alone at night without adult supervision. If kids are mature enough to be out without supervision, remind them to stick to familiar areas that are well lit and trick-or-treat in groups.

Keep Costumes Both Creative and Safe

- Decorate costumes and bags with reflective tape or stickers and, if possible, choose light colors.

- Choose face paint and makeup whenever possible instead of masks, which can obstruct a child's vision.

- Have kids carry glow sticks or flashlights to help them see and be seen by drivers.

- When selecting a costume, make sure it is the right size to prevent trips and falls.

Drive Extra Safely on Halloween

- Slow down and be especially alert in residential neighborhoods. Children are excited on Halloween and may move in unpredictable ways.

- Take extra time to look for kids at intersections, on medians and on curbs.

- Enter and exit driveways and alleys slowly and carefully.

- Eliminate any distractions inside your car so you can concentrate on the road and your surroundings.

- Drive slowly, anticipate heavy pedestrian traffic and turn your headlights on earlier in the day to spot children from greater distances.

- Popular trick-or-treating hours are 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. so be especially alert for kids during those hours.

