

Pint-Sized Superheroes, Cartoon Stars Bring Halloween to MTA



By VERONICA TORREJÓN

(Oct. 31, 2003) Halloween festivities kicked off early for children at the Gateway Child Development Center, Friday, as close to 70 pint-sized superheroes, cartoon stars, and fairytale characters paraded around the MTA lobby to the delight of onlookers.

A chorus of “Trick or Treats” could be heard from children ranging in age from 6-months to 6-years. Superman, Scooby Doo, Tigger, Bob the Builder, Snow White, The Incredible Hulk, and Spiderman were among the parade attendees.

“I’m Winnie the Pooh,” says 2-year-old Austin Compton, whose father Keith works as a chief administrative analyst for the MTA Diversity and Economic Opportunities Department.

It was the largest turnout in several years, said Center Director Esmeralda Ortiz. The Center, located in the MTA

Doing her best lamb impression, nine-month-old Amber Kashay warms up backstage.



Two-year-old Austin Compton rests in the arms of his mother Karen before his big debut.



Even Superman needs a little help from his dad -- Three-year-old A.J. Reyes gets a last-minute costume adjustment by his dad Leo Reyes.



Plaza on Cesar Chavez Boulevard, cares for infants as young as 6-weeks-old and children up to age 6.

More than half of children at the center belong to MTA employees many of who brought candy for the mini Trick-or-Treaters. Some, like Administrative Intern Shante Bell were overwhelmed by the number of children in the parade.

No more candy!

"I don't have any more candy," says Bell incredulously. "Where are all these kids coming from?"

Behind the scene in the Center, parents frantically straightened hats, touched-up makeup, took last-minute pictures and adjusted costumes.

"I wanna look in the mirror," said Austin, before scampering away from the outstretched arms of his mother, Karen, who was busy drawing whiskers on his face.

Close by, city employee Leo Reyes smiled proudly behind the lens of his camera at his 3-year-old son dressed as Superman. "A.J., smile for Daddy," said Reyes.

For some, like 6-month old Tyson Belle, whose father Terrence works as an MTA signal inspector, the experience was a first.

"This is his first Halloween ever," said his mother, Superior Court employee Shalonn Belle. "I just had to be here."

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Gearing up for the big parade is Assistant Director Lisa Johnson and her flock of superheroes and princesses.



Trick-or-Treaters from the Gateway Child Development Center arrive in style.



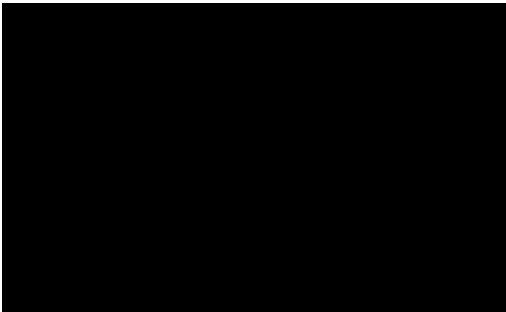
Ever the reluctant star, 16-month-old Preston Howey stops crying long enough to pose for the camera with his dad, Chief Administrative Analyst Donald Howey.



Candy gram.



Andrea Burnside escorts a rocket man, son Thomas, down the candy lane.





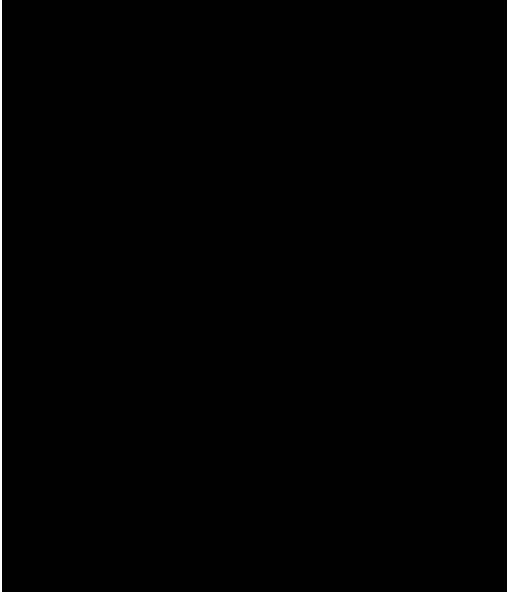
Trick-or-Treaters trade smiles for candy as employees hand out the goodies.



All ready for the sock hop are administrative interns Shante Bell, Helen Valenzuela, Pricila Hidalgo, and Anne Nguyen.



This little M&M is cute enough to make anyone melt. The center's youngest Trick-or-Treater, 6-month old Tyson Belle, retreats from the spotlight in the arms of his mother



Shalonn.



PHOTOS: GAYLE ANDERSON