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TOP STORY

## Ahwatukee woman races clock to give needy kids a happier Halloween

By Paul Maryniak, AFN Executive Editor Oct 25, 2017



Kimberly Carrillo/AFN Photographer

Sabrina Ramirez says she's been battling myasthenia gravis for four years, much of that time undergoing chemotherapy treatments.

But her ordeal is far from her mind this time of year.

Instead of focusing on herself, she's frantically trying to help as many poor kids as possible have a happy Halloween.

As she has done for about a dozen years, the Ahwatukee woman has put out a call for gently used costumes that she can distribute to needy children whose parents can barely afford food and rent, let alone trick-or-treating gear.

Though she says her condition "is very debilitating," Ramirez finds her costume drive energizing.

"It pushes me to help people," she said.

Her garage is already bursting with costumes, and the overflow is now inundating her living room.

But Ramirez said she can't possibly collect all the costumes she needs by Friday, Oct. 27.

"The number of kids who could use them keeps rising," said Ramirez, who has enlisted the aid of three Ahwatukee businesses and a church to serve as drop-off sites for costumes. Ahwatukee Girl Scout Troop 3814 also is helping out to gather more.

Ramirez started her annual drive after her daughter, Sofia Reyes, came home from third grade at Lomas Elementary and asked, "Why can't everyone have a costume?"

"I was a single parent and I know how tough it is," said Ramirez. "You have times when you have to decide, 'Do I get a costume or do I buy food?' There's really no choice."

Sofia, now a student at Mesa Community College, helps her mom with the drive as does Ramirez' son, Hugo, who, like his sister, graduated from Centennial Middle and Mountain Pointe High schools.

Besides wanting to make as many kids have a happy Trick or Treat Night, Ramirez has a more personal reason for putting so much of her limited energy into the drive.

Halloween is special to her because it's also her mother's birthday.

"This wasn't just a day to go trick-or-treating," Ramirez said. "It was always a party. We celebrated my mother's birthday and it was just a happy day."

Ramirez distributes the costumes at the migrant farmer center in Eloy and the St. Vincent de Paul Society's downtown Phoenix dining room, "when families go there for dinner."

“The migrant workers have nothing. They could never afford even a mask for their kids,” she said.

“You wouldn’t believe how happy the kids are” when costumes are dispensed, she said.

“I have it down to a science,” Ramirez explained. “Every child gets a ticket. Parents are not allowed to go in with them when they pick their costume. I want this to be the child’s decision, not the parents’ choice.”

“Every one of the costumes is in good condition,” she added, noting some donations are just freshly purchased by people sympathetic to her cause.

People can drop costumes off at the following Ahwatukee locations: Zzeeks Pizza at Warner Road and 48th Street; Nothing Bundt Cakes in the Target plaza on the northwest corner of Ray Road and 48th Street; Eos Fitness on Elliot Road at 50th Street; and Corpus Christ Catholic Church’s main office, 3550 E. Knox Road.