

"One of the Best Parades in the Country": Alton Halloween Parade Draws Big Crowd

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - The 106th Alton Halloween Parade combined the creepy and the chilly with over 70 participants and thousands of attendees on Halloween night, 2023.

“This is the place ,” Alton Mayor David Goins said. “Cold or whatever, it doesn’t really matter, because people are going to come out for this parade. And so we’re going to be out here, too.”

Most of Alton’s population seemed to agree, with a huge audience of all ages turning out to watch one of the longest-running parades in the country.

[Former Alderman Charlie Brake](#) was honored as the parade marshal. Brake served as an Alton alderman for 26 years before his retirement in June, and he noted that he was “really pleased” to be included in the evening.

“It’s kind of a keen way to shut it down,” he said. “This will be one of my last official things to do...I couldn’t believe it when they asked me because normally they give that to well-known people in the city. I never thought they’d ever come down to Charlie Brake riding in the car.”

Brake joked that his right hand would be cold as he threw out candy to the audience, but added he was lucky to be in the car as temperatures dropped. Other parade participants were bundled up and shivering, but even 30-degree weather couldn’t stop them from having a great night as they honored the tradition of the Alton Halloween Parade.

“We’re freezing,” laughed Scott Schultz, who drove a “Jurassic Park”-themed Jeep through the parade with his son Nathan. “It’s our third time doing it. It’s just a family thing, me and my son. We’ve won a few awards with it.”

Nathan joked that they might “freeze to death,” but they were still there to have a fun time. The [Alton Physical Therapy](#) group’s float was also an homage to “Jurassic Park,” and they said it took several weeks to put it together and build the giant paper mache dinosaur. They agreed it was all about “team-building and community,” said company manager Stephanie Wheeler.

“We knew it would be fun, but last year was just too much fun, just getting us all together and the participation that we had with the company,” Sumer Maupin, an occupational therapist assistant, added. “We were like, ‘There’s no way that was our last year.’”

Last year’s parade was also on the mind of [orthopedic surgeon Dr. Bruce Vest](#), whose float took first place in the 2022 Halloween Parade. Vest’s 2023 “Dragon Fest Spooktacular” float had two levels and “dragons and skeletons galore,” including a talking dragon. But like the other parade participants, Vest emphasized that the parade was really all about having a good night.

“We’re here to entertain the crowd,” he said. “And we want to give our great thanks to the [East End Improvement Association](#) for putting on this every year. They do a great job.”

While the participants were excited for the parade to start, the audience was even more energetic as the night went on. A lot of families have parade traditions, but there were a few newcomers this year, including one family who said they’ve always watched [the parade’s livestream](#) but decided they had to come down in person this time to check it out for themselves.

Meanwhile, Keosha Debruce has brought her kids down to the parade every year since they were little. This year marked the second parade she got to spend with her partner, Craig Minor. The two of them considered this to be a fun, sentimental milestone in their relationship.

“The kids are having fun, they're happy. I mean, it’s cold but hey, there’s medicine for that,” Debruce laughed.

That seemed to be the consensus as the audience cheered on dozens of floats, bands and cars. The Alton Halloween Parade is a beloved tradition in the Riverbend region, and everyone out on Halloween night seemed happy to be a part of it.

As Goins summarized, “One of the best parades in the country.”