



Photo by Stacy Wescoe

An unidentified pedestrian passes a sign promoting an upcoming fall scarecrow-making event in the Borough of Emmaus.

Fall activities to scare up downtown shopping

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Throughout downtown Emmaus, bright yellow signs are posted encouraging support for a new campaign.

"Just Say Yes to Scarecrows," the signs read. While the signs imply some kind of civic activism or political campaign, they are actually part of a new promotion to attract customers to patronize businesses in Emmaus.

Business owners in area downtowns like Emmaus are using new promotions, favorite annual events and other methods to spark renewed customer traffic this fall.

"We want to bring people into the downtown community and promote the merchants in Emmaus and in the community," said Kathy Haney, of Emmaus-based Haney Associates and an organizer of the scarecrow event.

Haney is part of a new group of Emmaus businesses that have teamed up over the past year to pool advertising dollars and coordinate special events. The group, The Shops of Emmaus, works independently of the Emmaus Main Street program and has just launched its own Web site, www.shopsofermaus.com, which lists upcoming events as well as provides printable coupons for businesses.

The scarecrow promotion, called the First Annual Fall Fling and Scarecrow Contest, will pair nonprofit groups with 27 participating Emmaus businesses. The event kicks off Sept. 21. Each group, which must be registered in advance, gets a bail of hay to create a scarecrow.

After the scarecrows are constructed, they will stand outside the businesses.

"A collection bucket will be in each business," Haney said. "Customers will go in and vote for their favorite scarecrow."

All of the money donated by customers will go to the charity or organization that created the scarecrow they voted for. The event will run through Oct. 12, when six winners will be chosen.

Haney said many of businesses who are participating in the scarecrow event will coordinate promotions to tie into the event, particularly on Sept. 21 and Oct. 12.

West Reading businesses plan to celebrate all that is autumn at their Fall Festival on the Avenue event, which will be held from 1 to 9 p.m. Sept. 20.

Nevin Hollinger, executive director of the West Reading Main Street program, said the festival will include some displays by artists, entertainment and food from local restaurants.

"The fall festival is geared toward the greater Reading community to attract people, have them participate in the activities and

recognize the many businesses and hopefully generate sales," Hollinger said.

West Reading is also planning a Taste of West Reading event on Nov. 1, which is designated specifically for the businesses on Penn Avenue and will serve as a fund-raiser for the West Reading Business Association. Restaurants in the borough will provide food for the event, and a silent auction will be held.

Easton has dozens of events planned this fall, said Kim Kmetz, manager of the Easton Main Street program.

Among what's on tap: Jazz in the Square, Sept. 12, 7:30-9:30 p.m., Centre Square; Lafayette Day in the Square, Sept. 20, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Centre Square; Jazz in the Square,

Sept. 26, 7:30-9:30 p.m., Centre Square; and Easton Garlic Fest, Oct. 4, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Centre Square and beyond.

Fall means the return of students to Kutztown University, so businesses around the campus are gearing up with a number of events.

On Sept. 26-27, parents and students will be

welcomed back to school through the "Paint the Town Gold" event. Students will be invited come and enjoy the downtown, says Liz Weiss of the Northeast Berks Chamber of Commerce. The event will feature an open-air market for both the community and students.

On Oct. 25, Kutztown borough and Maxatawny will host a Halloween Parade which will run in conjunction with the university's homecoming festivities.

The goal of the events is to bring exposure to the businesses in Kutztown and the surrounding area.

"I think these events spotlight small towns to the people in this area and what small towns have to offer to the rest of the community," Weiss said. "We need in this economy to shop locally and this helps promote that."