

## The Costume Shoppe has a look for every occasion

By Brenda Erdahl

You might think October is the busy time of year for the Costume Shoppe and you would be right, it is. But so is November, December and January. In fact, there's never a dull moment at this unique store located on Division Street in Maple Lake.

Owned by former Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus performer and professional clown, Tricia Manuel, it's Halloween every day at the Costume Shoppe.

It's a rare occasion when one or more of their thousands of costumes isn't out on the streets making somebody's party, fundraiser or event a little more colorful and fun. In Manuel's 31 years doing business, she's found there's always some occasion in need of a creative get-up, and people come from all over Central Minnesota for Manuel's costumes specifically. That's because the Maple Lake Costume Shoppe offers better value than other costume shops, is "second to none" when it comes to customer service, is laid out in a unique way that allows people to browse, has generous rental times and provides costumes that are always clean and disinfected, Manuel said.

### Accessibility and variety

The Maple Lake Costume Shoppe is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. five days a week, all year round which means customers don't have to worry about making an appointment, they can just stop in and browse anytime they are in the neighborhood.

In October, for the Halloween sea-



son, The Costume Shoppe offers extended hours. But Manuel doesn't just carry Halloween costumes. She has costumes for all the holidays from Christmas and Easter to St. Patrick's Day and October Fest.

She owns 20 Easter Bunny costumes alone and they are all in high demand come Easter time. Most of them go to organizations like local Lions clubs, Commercial clubs and churches for their celebrations. It's the same around Christmas for Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus and his elves. She also has just about every Christmas mascot you can think of, from Frosty the Snowman to Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer and Frozen's Olaf. She even has a Christmas tree with working lights.

Need a President Roosevelt costume for a history assignment? No problem, they have costumes from all eras - 1880 to 1980 and more - plus Renaissance garb, all the Disney princesses and

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The Costume Shoppe staff go above and beyond to make your experience enjoyable and memorable. Pictured above is Julia Swanson, left, with her mom and owner Tricia Manuel, right. The Costume Shoppe, located on Division Street in Maple Lake is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. five days a week, all year round. Not pictured, Mary Christian is the third member of their valuable staff.

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[www.thecostumeshop.us](http://www.thecostumeshop.us)

their cohorts plus some favorite throwbacks like Rainbow Bright, Strawberry Shortcake and all the characters from The Beverly Hillbillies and Gilligan's Island T.V. sitcoms.

The Costume Shoppe specializes in couple's costumes. You and your partner will find everything from matching garden gnome get-ups to Little Red Riding Hood and the Big Bad Wolf.

Have a child dressing up as a dinosaur for Halloween? Manuel can set parents up in Jurassic park ranger outfits so the whole family can get in on the fun.

"We have something here for everyone," Manuel said. "A man called one time and asked if I had any chicken costumes. I said, 'yes, I do. I have a white one, a brown one and a cracked egg. Then I said, 'you lost a bet didn't you,' and he said 'yeah, I did.'"

If they don't have something specific, show them a picture of what you are looking for and odds are they'll be able to piece something together you're going to love.

### Second to none service

At The Costume Shoppe, they care about finding you a costume that fits you well physically and fits your event, Manuel said. If you are not quite sure what to wear to a specific party, they can help with that too.

"If there is anything we have an abundance of, it's ideas," said Manuel's daughter Julia Swanson who works in the shop alongside her mom. They particularly love murder mystery dinner parties and are all too happy to help you



The Costume Shoppe has thousands of costumes in stock for people to browse through.

develop your character. If you are struggling with a theme for your party, they can help with that too.

Don't be afraid to ask for something specific, Manuel said. Odds are they have it and know exactly where it is among the thousands of options. If they don't have it, you probably shouldn't be wearing it.

"We like to say everyone from grandmas to little kids can come in here and not be scared. We do not rent scary clown costumes, and we have no scary masks here," Manuel said.

### Quality and cleanliness

The Costume Shoppe's inventory consists of a combination of items made in-house by staff, items staff have found that meet their quality standards and purchased, repurposed items, items acquired from other costume

shops and even some donated items. It's those donated items that allow the costume shoppe to be affordable when schools need to rent a lot of costumes for a play.

"We can be very affordable to schools because of those donations so every student gets a great costume. Every student deserves a great costume, not just the lead," Manuel said.

The Costume Shoppe staff also put a lot of effort into keeping their costumes in good repair and clean.

"Everything is washed and disinfected because we wouldn't want to wear dirty stuff either," Manuel said.

### Generous rental times

At the Costume Shoppe, staff realize your time is valuable which

is why when you rent a costume for a weekend party, you can pick it up on Thursday and you have until Monday to return it.

"We want to make it easy for people, especially if they are driving an hour to get here. We don't want them to have to run into the store the day of their party especially if they are hosting, they have enough to do," Manuel said.

### When to make an appointment

There is something for everyone at the costume shoppe, but if you are looking for something specific it might be a good idea to call early and get it reserved.

"We have people who rent their costumes in August for Halloween because the year before when they came in it was already rented,"

Manuel said.

The Costume Shoppe asks for payment up front, but once that's done it won't be rented to anybody else the day of your event.

Appointments are a good idea if you are looking for a very specific costume, Manuel said. Making an appointment will give staff the opportunity to take your measurements and help you find exactly what you are looking for. Appointments are required for makeup applications.

Swanson is a talented makeup artist and can bring your vision to life. She too was a Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus clown and has taught classes on face painting. She's efficient at special effects make-up and face paint. If you know exactly what you are looking for, it's best to bring in a picture and she can replicate it.

### From 50 to 1,000 costumes

Manuel had no idea how big her costume shoppe would grow when she opened it 31 years ago in a back room of her parent's department store in downtown Maple Lake. What started with 50 costumes soon grew to more than one room could handle. When her dad retired, she took over the entire store and then that became too small. Her current location on Division Street provides just the right amount of space and she says she has no plans to outgrow it.

Today her inventory numbers in the thousands.

For more information on The Costume Shoppe, visit [thecostumeshop.us](http://thecostumeshop.us) or call 320-963-6277.



Julie Swanson is the Costume Shoppe's talented makeup artist, and she can bring your vision to life. Schedule an appointment before your next costume party.



The Costume Shoppe in Maple Lake provides costumes for area theatre groups and school drama programs. Above is the Queen of Hearts costume from Alice in Wonderland.



The Costume Shoppe specializes in couples' costumes. Looking for something specific? Be sure to ask the knowledgeable staff.