

Fall Fest offers harvest



LARRY DEVINE | DAILY TIMES HERALD

Dressed as Ernesto de la Cruz from the movie "Coco," Andrew Perez, 4, son of Pedro and Jackeline Perez of Carroll, watches a Saving Our Avian Resources raptor presentation at Fall Fest. Fall Fest visitors were welcomed to wear Halloween costumes to the event, which celebrates the change of seasons.



ABOVE: Saving Our Avian Resources program director Jackeline Perez shows a 13-year-old peregrine falcon named Ana at Fall Fest. The bird is one of the world's fastest animals, able to reach speeds of 200 miles per hour.

BELOW: Thomas Irlbeck, 6, rushes to catch his sister Olivia's raptor at Fall Fest. Thomas and Olivia are children of the late Paul Irlbeck of St. Paul, Minnesota, and grandchildren of Paul and Mary Irlbeck.

Daily Times Herald staff

The breezy and chilly but sunny weather Oct. 20 was just inviting enough to get people out of their homes to appreciate the many Fall Fest activities offered in the Swan Lake State Park State Park Conservation Education Center.

Carroll County Conservation Naturalist Matt Wetrich said the weather probably helped boost Fall Fest attendance to an above-average count of more than 300 people, including children of a wide range of ages.

"Even if it wasn't perfect to spend much time outside, it was good weather to get out and about," Wetrich said.

"There was a lot of excitement by kids especially," he added.

Many of the Fall Fest visitors enjoyed the challenge of finding their way through the prairie maze just east of the Conservation Education Center; otherwise, the other activities were inside.

They included arts and crafts as well as toys, games and other activities provided by the Carroll County Historical Society.

In one room, Saving Our Avian Resources exhibited a peregrine falcon and American kestrel. Savanna Judson and Taylor Smith from SOAR led the program, providing information about the birds and answering visitors' questions.

In another room, New Opportunities Family Development Center offered pumpkin games and handed out Halloween treats. Many visitors

welcomed the invitation to attend in Halloween costume.

New Opportunities also displayed signs around the room bearing information about the need for food assistance locally and statewide. Admission to Fall Fest was free, though visitors were encouraged to bring non-perishable food items to donate to New Opportunities Family Development Center's food pantry. The donations nearly filled two shopping carts and weighed a total of 140 pounds.

Downstairs, visitors could enjoy a taste of the season as apple cider from Deal's Orchard near Jefferson and Pokey's caramel apples were served. Freewill donations were welcomed for the treats. "Part of celebrating the fall season is celebrating the har-

vest, so we obviously being an agricultural region, it extends even beyond our row crops to lots of other things we eat here," Wetrich said. "It's great for folks to remember where their food comes from and that protecting our natural resources is an important part of having a healthy and prosperous food system."

"The biggest thing we do to consume natural resources is getting our food to our plates. A lot of food travels a long way, and a lot goes into producing and transporting that food. This is something that helps folks think about that a little bit."

Wetrich noted Fall Fest encompasses a variety of areas — wildlife, natural resources, hunger, heritage — but somehow it all fits.



LEFT: The Man of Steel is also a man of music as Bryer Tigger, 2, son of Ben and April Tigges of Willey, plays a toy xylophone provided by Carroll County Historical Society at Fall Fest.

