? The crisp morning air is a sure sign of Fall. Local citizens are gearing for the trees to change to their beautiful reds, golds and oranges, another true sign that Fall is here.

Local stores and family produce markets have bright orange pumpkins in all shapes and sizes ready to become your jack-o-lantern to welcome trick-or-treaters to your door this Halloween.

Some citizens have even started decorating for the season with mums in their beautiful yellows and reds and lavenders with bales of hay and scarecrows and witches.

Another true sign of the Fall is the annual Autumn on the River Festival in historic Bethlehem. The festival, in its 16th year, was threatened three years ago. The volunteers organizing the event were becoming small in numbers and the festival was becoming too much.

Co-Chairs of the festival, Andi Oles and David Abbott, have taken reigns of the festival and seen record numbers in the past two years in attendance and vendors.

“We have really enjoyed helping with this festival. I am always ready for the festival weekend. It’s nice to see everyone bring their family and spend a day in Bethlehem and truly enjoy themselves,” Abbott stated.

The Autumn on the River Festival Prince and Princess Contest was held on Sunday, October 12. The festival royalty are Princess Megan Rawlings and Prince Hunter Spear. Ivonna Eldridge was princess first runner up while Emma DeCamp was second runner up. Austin Swoboda was prince first runner up while second runner up went to Keegan Webb. The AOTR Prince and Princess Court are: Alexis Napier, Alyssa Rawlings, Bethany Griffin, Briley Nichols, Isabella Eldridge, Katie Rawlings, Madison Jones, Savana Lewellen and Sylvia Greenleaf.

The festival will again feature many, many vendors.

“This year we have a lot of new vendors. Last year we had a lot of people asking for persimmon pudding and pumpkin pie and unfortunately we did not have that to offer. This year we do have vendors to sell pumpkin pie and persimmon pudding,” Abbott added.

He continued, “We also are going to have a vendor that will offer horse rides for the first time. Pictures will be offered to remember your horse ride for a small fee.”

Many raffles will be offered during the weekend. Clark County Sheriff Danny Rodden has donated a 20" flat-screen television to be raffled. Clark County Councilman Chuck Moore has donated a DVD player to also be raffled. A 50/50 pot and a quilt raffle will also be featured.

The raffle tickets will be offered for $1 each.

“Our quilt raffle is always a big hit. We will drawn for all the raffles on Sunday at 5 p.m. at the conclusion of the festival,” Abbott explained.

The Autumn on the River Festival Committee will also be selling commemorative bricks again this year. For more information regarding the purchase of a brick please stop by the information booth located in front of the schoolhouse.

Autumn on the River will host a hot air balloon glow at 7 p.m. on Saturday evening.

The balloon glow should be a beautiful site with the Ohio River as a backdrop.

Anyone wishing to participate in the balloon glow should contact Abbott for more information at 502-931-4669.

“Right now we have a commitment from the Sunnyside of Louisville balloon and are looking for others to help make the first balloon glow memorable,” Abbott added.

A new feature for Saturday and Sunday will be a Woodland Indian presentation. The presentation will be located on the west side of the historic schoolhouse in Bethlehem.

Another favorite is back. Helicopter rides will be offered for just $35.

“We had the helicopter the first year I was involved. They were unable to make it last year and people were asking about them. I am glad we can offer the helicopter rides again,” he added.

Old favorites will also be featured during the festival.

“There are certain things that people come back year after year for. The Cattlemen’s Association will again be grilling and selling ribeye steak sandwiches,” Abbott said.

Great festival food will also be offered by vendors including funnel cakes, kettle corn and grilled corn on the cob.

The Autumn on the River Festival always offers a great spread of homemade food in the basement of the schoolhouse.

“We will also have bean soup and cornbread, chili, hot dogs, and pulled pork sandwiches. Another item people always come back for is the fresh baked cookies. You can’t be near the schoolhouse when the cookies are being baked and not be tempted to go purchase a cookie or two,” Abbott said.

Clark Memorial Hospital will also be offering flu and pneumonia shots at their booth on Saturday and Sunday. You must be 18 years old to receive the shots.

“We thought the flu shots would be a great thing to offer. Many citizens always think they need to get one and never have the time to get one with everyone’s hectic schedule. This way, when you are enjoying the festival, you will be able to go ahead and get your flu shot to be safe for the rest of the winter,” Abbott explained.

The flu shots will be offered free of charge to those on Medicare Part B. You must have your Medicare Card to receive the flu shot free. Citizens wishing to receive a flu shot who are not on Medicare may receive one for $25 each. The pneumonia shot will be offered for $40 or you may receive both shots for $60.

A tram will also be running on Saturday and Sunday. The tour of historic Bethlehem will offer a short history of the area while participants enjoy the scenery. The tram will be driven by Dan Moore.

The Autumn on the River Festival’s annual auction will be held at 10 a.m. on Saturday morning.

“Joe Madera has done a fantastic job with the auction again this year. I don’t know how he pulls this together be he always has a successful event,” Abbott said.

Car enthusiasts and tractor buffs will also spend some extra time at the festival. An antique car and tractor display will be held on Saturday and Sunday in the field by the parking area.

The third annual dog show will be held on Saturday at 1 p.m. For more information regarding the dog show please contact (812) 248-2484.

Also on Saturday afternoon will be a special ceremony honoring veterans. The ceremony will be held at 2 p.m.

“We always like to honor our military veterans. They are so appreciative of this small act. We all need to thank our local heroes for without them we would not be able to live in a free country,” Abbott added.

Parade fans will begin lining the streets of Bethlehem early to find the prime seats for the annual parade. The parade will be held on Saturday at 2:30 p.m.

“This year we are honored to have Dan and Ruthann Waterfill as our grand marshals of the parade. There are not two people more deserving than the Waterfills. Sixteen years ago they had a vision of the old Bethlehem Schoolhouse. It was falling down and had a lot of deterioration problems. They could see the history of Bethlehem slipping by with no way of

preserving this history for future generations. The two began the festival with all proceeds going for the upkeep of the school," Abbott added with a smile. "Dan and Ruthann were joined by so many volunteers who shared their same vision. Without them the schoolhouse probably would not be standing today."

A cornhole tournament will be held on Saturday at 3 p.m. Registration for the tourney will be held from 12 noon to 2 p.m.

A horseshoe pitching contest will be held on Sunday at 3 p.m. Registration for the horseshoe tourney will be held from 12 noon to 2 p.m. For more information regarding either tournament please contact Jeff Shepherd Sr. at 256-9458.

"Jeff does a fantastic job with the cornhole and horseshoe contests each year. He takes control of both of them and works hard to provide the participants with a fun and challenging tournament. I always hear great things from the people playing in the tournaments," Abbott added.

The entertainment provided during the festival is always a huge hit for festival-goers.

"We have people come early and stay late. They just hang out on the straw bales and enjoy the free entertainment. We even have people get up and start dancing around the bales of straw. You can just tell they are having a wonderful time," Abbott added.

He continued, "Andi (Oles) is in charge of the entertainment. She has done a wonderful job getting great acts for the weekend. I am looking forward to the entertainment myself."

Charlestown's own BoDean Adams will kick off the festival at 12 noon on Saturday.

The Marlinaires will perform at 3 p.m. on Saturday.

Entertainment on Sunday will begin with Randy and Marsha Hensley with performing gospel favorites at 12 noon. Lanny Hatt & Hard Tymes will take the stage at 3 p.m.

"Randy and Marsha are favorites in the local area. We will have people come just to hear them perform. This is the third year they will entertain the crowd at Autumn on the River. I am really looking forward to seeing them perform some of the gospel favorites everyone grew up with," Abbott said.

Radio Disney will also be back this year on Sunday. They will begin at 1 p.m.

Abbott said Radio Disney is a huge hit with the younger crowd.

"This is always a big treat for the kids. Radio Disney entertains the young crowd and also the young at heart," he continued. "Radio Disney actually brings the kid out in everyone. I seen my co-chair Andi Oles up dancing around last year truly enjoying herself."

When asked about the construction on Highway 62 and if he thought it may become a problem Abbott was quick to answer.

"Highway 62 is closed at Salem Church Road. We know many people travel Highway 62 to get to our festival. I want to ensure them that we have clearly marked the detour. There will be signs leading them back to Highway 62 in order to get them safely to Bethlehem," Abbott stated.

The preparation for the festival has been ongoing. Sheriff Rodden offered help to clean up the roads by picking up the trash in the ditches leading to the festival.

"The crew offered by Danny have really worked hard to make the roads to Bethlehem look nice. They will also help with the set up of the festival and will help with the clean up after the event," Abbott explained. "Without them it would be difficult to get this job accomplished. We really appreciate their help and Danny offering the assistance."

On site during the two day festival, Clark County Sheriff Deputies and Reserves will be on hand for security, Clark County EMS will also be on site for emergency response and members of the New Washington Volunteer Fire Department will also be on hand for any unforeseen

emergencies.

Abbott added by stating why he is involved with the festival.

“Three years ago I became involved. Every year my goal has been the same, for festival goers to come down the hill, spend the day in Bethlehem and enjoy themselves without spending a lot of money. I just want everyone to load up their car with grandma, grandpa, aunts and uncles and the kids and even bring the family pet, so everyone can have a great time and make special family memories and meet new friends. It even gives people an opportunity to reminisce about the old school days at Bethlehem’s schoolhouse.,” Abbott said.

“It still amazes me what happens in New Washington during the Autumn on the River Festival weekend. There are so many yard sales from when you enter New Washington on Highway 62 all the way through almost to Bethlehem,” he said.

Abbott concluded, “This is just my way of giving back to Clark County and helping to make Clark County a better place to live and raise a family.”