SUGGESTIONS FOR BUILDING YOUR FLOAT

TYPES OF FLOATS AND WAYS TO TAKE PART

Most parade floats are fun, inexpensive affairs atop a pickup truck or small trailer, or even a group simply walking happily.

The walking float is the simplest and cheapest. No vehicle will be needed. It also can be one of the most entertaining. With some time to rehearse, groups with little time or money can put in a great entry. You may need little more than costumes. Examples range from people walking & greeting the crowd; clowns and unicyclists; uniformed service or other clubs; performing groups such as gymnasts; to a marching band.

Kids love to get the chance to be in a parade! You could come up with an idea for a decorated kid’s wagon, stroller or whatever, with your child starring in it. And of course you get to do all the pushing or pulling – what an opportunity!

This year we are inviting all the kids who bring their decorated bikes to the parking lot for judging and prizes, to take part in the parade too. If you want to walk along with them, you will be very welcome.

Many floats that you see in a parade are built overnight, limited only by the group’s budget, and a little know-how.

The traditional float can be made from a wood frame, chicken wire and colored paper tissue or fabric covering, perhaps with elaborate props, built or placed on the back of a pickup truck or flatbed trailer. This type generally takes the longest to build, and will be the most expensive.

A large group of people may need several days to build this kind of float. It will require good teamwork and some plans. Keep in mind how time consuming it can be to make everything. The frame will take the most skill, while the decorating will take the most time. So, the more decorators you have, the better!
PLANNING

Something important you will need is a safe and secure place, dry and well lit, to store and work on your materials and finished display, over the amount of time you will need. This could mean anything from your living room, an empty garage, to someone’s warehouse.

It is a good idea to start your planning several weeks before the parade. Have a meeting to discuss ideas.

Decide what you are able to do with what you have, including people, materials, time, and money, and pick a type of float that meets your goals and capabilities.

Decide on a design for the float, based on a theme. Creativity can be the hardest part of making the float, but can also be the most fun. Get everyone involved to give input as to how the float should look.

Bare in mind how long you will have both your vehicle and your trailer when planning how to build and when to install your creations.

You will want your float to be entertaining, colorful, and eye catching. It should make its point quickly. Your goal is to entertain everyone along the parade route during the few moments they have to look as you pass by. Try to offer things that will please people of all ages.

If you have storage, you might think about making something you can use again, maybe with a few changes. The Christmas Santa Claus parade, for example. That will save a lot of work next time.

MATERIALS & COSTS

Most floats can be built for no more than $200.00; and many are put together at almost no cost. You are only limited by your ingenuity. Some ideas for how to keep your costs down:

Chicken wire is cheap. Cloth scraps, used or waste lumber, tissue paper, old cans of paint, lettering made from Styrofoam sheets are some ideas. Overcome any qualms you may have, and visit the garbage dump - people throw away all kinds of useful stuff. They even make recycled paint and other things available there for free. Just remember that things will either have to be waterproof, or else have some means of quickly covering up, in case it rains on your parade.

SOME IDEAS FOR A BUILT FLOAT

Depending on how elaborate your float is going to be, it might include:

Pallets, used to build a structure on the platform of your float.
An apron or skirt around your trailer platform, that hides the wheels and gives the impression of “floating” – hence the name. Sheet polythene cut into ribbons is an economical way.

Seating – you may need seats for some or all of your riders. Make sure they are well secured to the platform.

Guardrail when there are people standing – an essential safety feature. We don’t want anyone falling off.

All the things that you build on the platform, and the decorations – anything goes that meets the parade regulations. Just make sure you plan to have enough to do the job – too bad to run out just before the parade starts!

Signage – you may want to promote your theme or organization to the crowd. Make sure that the words are big enough for people to read them from a distance – make a sample and test it by standing back 20 or 30 feet.

Costumes – you can make them, buy them, or even rent them. Whatever you do, everyone will enjoy them.

Music is always an effective part of a parade – see what you can come up with.

Movement – special effects that spin or do other things are lots of fun. Just make sure they are safe.

**INSPIRATION**

Need advice or ideas from an experienced local float-builder? Where to get special materials; how long does it take; how many people will I need?

The Visayos Philippine Cultural Association has always put on a good show for the parade. Tina Rivera has kindly volunteered to field your requests for help – give her a call at 873 5900. And thank you Tina, for being such a generous volunteer.