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Wiccans celebrate harvest, new year, lost loved ones

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While families dress up as witches, ghosts and cartoon characters tonight to trick or treat, a small group in Conroe will gather to celebrate the night a little more literally.

The Blackberry Circle will celebrate Samhain (or Halloween) as members of Wicca, a neo-pagan religion focused on the cycles of nature.

"It is basically the celebration of the end of the year and the beginning of the new year," said Jon Edens, the group's priest and elder who has practiced Wicca for more than 23 years. "It's our new year. It is the time summer ends and winter begins. It is also the last harvest of the year."

Like All Souls Day (Nov. 1) and Day of the Dead (Nov. 2), Samhain also is a time to remember loved ones who have passed away.

"It is one of the two times of the year the veil of this world and the spirit world is thin so we invite our ancestors who passed before us to celebrate with us," Edens said.

Despite misconceptions, Wiccans, or witches, as Edens prefers to be called, do not worship Satan.

"We acknowledge everyone has their own beliefs and ideas," Edens said. "We have a moral obligation to do what's right and be a good citizen.

"We don't worship the devil."

Instead, Wiccans believe in the duality of the universe of both male and female energies and worship both a God and a Goddess.

"There are so many misconceptions," said James Friend, Blackberry Circle member and practicing Wiccan for 12 years. "We don't sit there and cause harm to others. It's against our creed: 'Do what you will; harm none.'

"A lot of the things people say...just aren't true."

Friend will remember the lessons his ancestors taught him.

"It's a major turning point in the year," he said about Samhain. "It gives us a chance to reflect on our lives and our future. It gives us a chance to reflect on those who have moved on."

With four administrators and roughly 80 worshippers, Blackberry Circle received its non-profit corporation status March 20, 2007, according to the Texas Secretary of State's office.

To learn more about Blackberry Circle, visit www.blackberrycircle.org or call (936) 494-0372.

More info



The altar above was set up by members of Blackberry Circle, who practice the Wiccan religion, to honor ancestors and friends who have passed on as part of the 2007 Samhain (Halloween) celebration.

To learn more about Blackberry Circle, visit www.blackberrycircle.org or call (936) 494-0372.

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