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**“HALLOWEEN CONSULTANT” SHOWS HOW-TO AT A THRIFT STORE  
3 EASY STEPS TO A COOL HALLOWEEN COSTUME**

For information, contact: Kay Hwangbo

PR Consultant to St. Vincent de Paul of Los Angeles  
c) (323) 228-5733

LOS ANGELES—Alison “Cat” Slater, a downtown image-consultant, usually helps businessmen and –women dress for success. But come October, her job becomes more fun.

She creates memorable Halloween costumes that her clients will wear to their Fright Night parties, which might include *their* clients. She becomes a Halloween consultant of sorts, building her customers a, say, Spider King or Gothic Goddess costume that could run them \$1,500. And that doesn’t include her consulting fee of \$250 an hour.

But what if you don’t have that kind of money—but still want a cool costume? Fear not, dear reader.

Slater, 48, who is also a celebrity fashion-stylist, favors large thrift stores like St. Vincent de Paul, which have not only a wide selection of used Halloween costumes, but also regular clothes and home furnishings from which to draw. For example, you can use silk flowers or bead chains from the decorative-items section of the store to enhance your costume.

“St. Vincent’s is awesome,” she said. “That’s much more my idea of a thrift store. The more stuff a store has, the more luck you might have.” But Slater doesn’t have a favorite secondhand store.

“There’s no thrift store I won’t walk into,” said Slater, who is also a vintage-fashion expert. “Thrift stores work off of clothing donations. So you don’t know what they’re going to be putting out on any given day.”

To demonstrate how she works, Slater explains how she combines used clothing, accessories and jewelry to build a Gypsy costume. She gets a button-up blouse—preferably pink--unbuttons the lower buttons and ties the front corners into a knot at the woman’s diaphragm. She pairs the blouse with a long, flowy skirt—ideally with three

layers, in a floral print, of crinkly fabric. She ties a scarf at the hip. Finally, she adorns the client with cheap chains, bangles, and baubles.

This will work as a fortune-teller costume, too—you just need to get a crystal ball.

The most outrageous costume that Slater--a master seamstress--ever made was Post-Apocalyptic Mermaid. As a hobby, Slater wears historical/sci-fi/fantasy costumes to special events; i.e., she is a “costumer.” The mermaid costume--which she made for herself for a costume party--included both legs *and* a tail, green arms, and tattered clothing. She could even dance in it (she threw the fabric--“scaled” tail over her arm).

Some people don't feel comfortable wearing an outrageous costume, but they still want to be festive. The slender, raven-haired image-consultant once had a businessman client who had promised the hostess of an upcoming Halloween party, “I'll be there, with bells on.”

He went to the party in a business suit covered in bells, courtesy of Slater, who sewed on the bells. Decorations can also be hot-glued on clothing, if you don't have the time or skills to sew them on. The suit cost \$15 at a thrift store.

For people who like their costumes ready-to-go, St. Vincent's thrift store has a wide selection of 400 used costumes in a special Halloween section. The section is restocked daily, so that it always has 400 costumes. It also has Halloween masks and accessories, and some holiday decorations. Already-low costume prices will be 50 percent off, the entire week before Halloween.

“If you don't have \$10 to \$12 for a costume, you have the option--one week before Halloween--to get one for \$4 to \$6,” store manager Jorge(cq) Menjivar(cq) said.

Shopping thrift stores not only saves you money, but helps the needy and/or ill, if you shop at certain ones. For example, St. Vincent's thrift stores benefit low-income people, Goodwill secondhand stores assist unemployed people, and Out of the Closet thrift stores help HIV/AIDS patients. Shopping thrift stores also benefits the environment, because you're recycling.

Los Angeles is a Halloween mecca, laying claim to West Hollywood (which has the largest Halloween celebration in the world), world-class costume-designers, and perennially childish adults. There will be at least six major Halloween parties for adult Angelenos this fall, according to Time Out Los Angeles, an online entertainment guide. Eventbrite, an event-registration website, lists 66 total Halloween events in the L.A. area.

Now, back to the three steps of finding a cool Halloween costume. 1) Read this story. 2) Go to a thrift store and buy your costume. 3) Enjoy your Halloween.

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**St. Vincent de Paul thrift store.** Downtown Los Angeles: 210 N. Ave. 21. Long Beach: 2750 E. Pacific Coast Hwy. [svdpla.org](http://svdpla.org)

**Goodwill.** Eighty stores throughout Southern California. [goodwillsocal.org](http://goodwillsocal.org) Online store: [shopgoodwill.com](http://shopgoodwill.com)

**Out of the Closet.** Ten locations in the Los Angeles area. [outofthecloset.org](http://outofthecloset.org)

**La Brea Avenue** in the Mid-Wilshire district of Los Angeles. (La Brea Avenue from Santa Monica Boulevard to Wilshire Boulevard). Several “boutique”-style thrift stores—some also offering vintage clothes--including Jet Rag, Buffalo Exchange, The Way We Wore, and Golyester(cq) Vintage Clothing.