



## HELPFUL HINTS ON HOW TO BUILD A FLOAT FOR THE POPCORN PARADE

It takes a million different things to come together to make the perfect float, but with careful planning, a creative mind, and the right team, your experience can be a fun and productive one. Here are some of our helpful tips & tricks on how to do it.

**Step 1 – Plan:** Every great parade float starts out with an idea. Gather everyone together and brainstorm. Listen to each other and hear what they have to say. Sometimes a single word can result in becoming the whole idea. So have some fun and throw around some ideas.

**Step 2 – Sketch It Out:** Once you’ve come up with your concept, sketch it out and create a list of all the materials you will need for this undertaking.

**Step 3 – Build:** Once you’ve decided on your idea, now it’s time for the fun part: the build. Since getting started can be one of the most different parts, here is a list of items and supplies to help you:

- Flatbed, farm wagon, something to build your float on.
- Cardboard for shapes, structures, signs, etc.
- Wood, nails, saw, hammer, staple gun, etc.
- Chicken wire for papier-mâché, skirting, props, etc.
- Spray foam can be used for sculptures and adding pieces together.
- Paint sticks for glue spreading.
- Rubber gloves and old clothes.
- De-Solv-It spray. This works great for getting glue off of your skin.
- Paper towels, baby wipes, garbage bags, broom and dust pan.
- Spray paint. REMINDER, popped popcorn is 3D in shape, so you have to spray in different directions to get full coverage. Three light coats are better than 1 heavy coat because too much at once will soak the popcorn and cause it to shrink.
- Popped popcorn works much better after being left out a few days to get a bit stale. Fresh popped popcorn can still be a little squishy and is hard to glue on floats.
- Glitter is fun! When the sun hits it on parade day, it will guarantee “OOOHS!” and “AAAAHS!” from the crowd.
- Different glues work better on certain corn products.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Tite Bond Panel Adhesive or Daps “Beats The Nail” Construction Adhesive are great for popped and cracked corn, and can be found at many of the major hardware stores. Keep in mind, none of these glues wash out, so be sure to wear old clothes when you get to this part.
- Get your glue early, as they run out quickly around festival time.
- Elmer’s Glue works well with corn meal, cornflakes, etc.

**Step 4 – Popcorn and Corn Products:** Arguably the best part of any float entering the Popcorn Parade. How should you use it? Use your imagination! It’s unbelievable how many ways there are to use corn. Obviously popcorn will be featured prominently, but other corn products are fair game. This includes – but is not limited to:

- Kernels, Cracked corn, Corn meal, Cornflakes, Kix cereal, Microwave popcorn boxes, Corn husks, Corn silk, Corn leaves, Corn cob, Corn roots

Corn husks can be curled with a curling iron to make curly hairpieces, or to give it a bend wherever you need it. Corn meal is ideal for faces or small flat areas. Corn roots upside down can look like a tree. Corn silk is good for hair. As you can see, the possibilities are limitless. Just use your imagination!

As for how to acquire popcorn or corn products, you can contact a local farm or feed supply store and ask if they would be willing to donate. This could also work if you’re in need of a tractor or gator to pull your float.

Both popped and unpopped popcorn will be available from the Valparaiso Events office once your application has been approved by the parade committee. We usually start popping in August. To reserve your popcorn, you must call our office at 219-464-8332. You will receive **three (3) bags of popped popcorn** at a time (think large lawn-type bags), and we will let you know when it will be available.

- **NOTE** – For best results, once you get your popcorn home, open up the bags and allow it to get stale. It tends to hold up better when it is stale.

You may also request one (1) 35lb bag of un-popped kernels per organization. Additional bags are available to purchase for \$25 per bag.

**Step 5 – Height:** Floats should be no taller than 12 feet. This allows for clearance of overhead wires and street lights on the parade route, and to get it out of the bus barn.

**Step 6 – Skirting:** This is a very important feature of your float. Skirting is what gives the illusion of floating down the street. In the past, some people have used cardboard covered in corn products, or chicken wire with corn leaves weaved in and out. For the very bottom of the skirting, most use a fringe.

- **NOTE** – It’s good to leave at least 12-18” of space from the ground up to the bottom of the skirt in case of any bumps in the road.

**Step 6 – Have fun!** This may be the most important one. The Popcorn Festival is our biggest event of the year, and the Popcorn Festival Parade is a favorite amongst many in NWI and beyond. You did it. You worked hard, you had a vision, and now it’s ready to be admired by the entire community. Have some fun and enjoy it. You’ve earned it.