

# O'Halloran weaves memories into treasured tales that entertain

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Like an octopus hoards shiny objects for its underwater garden, storyteller Susan O'Halloran goes through life collecting anecdotes with the idea that they will eventually come together to form a larger tale.

"A lot of times, personal stories start with an image that is interesting," she explains.

"You just have a memory and you don't yet know what it means or what the story's going to be about. It's something you hear yourself telling at parties. As a teller, you're always tucking it away and saying, 'I could use that someday.' But you don't know where yet."

O'Halloran will share some of her most treasured tales as the next teller-in-residence for the popular Storytelling Live! series. Her residency, which runs from Tuesday, Sept. 27 – Saturday, Oct. 1, will feature daily matinee performances. All shows will begin at 2 p.m. in the Mary B. Martin Storytelling Hall in the heart of the International Storytelling Center. Tickets are limited and reservations are highly recommended.

The Chicago native is also skilled at helping people and organizations find new and compelling ways to tell their own stories. "I've been doing a lot of work with non-profits," she says.



Susan O'Halloran

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"So many of them are doing such good work. But people have compassion fatigue. They can't take in any more information. You're going to have to tell your story well if you want to get people's attention. There's too many things to care about, and you're trying to run your own life."

O'Halloran has found that

the key to crafting a good story — whether it's a tale about how a charity was founded or one that you grew up listening to your grandmother tell — is to make it entertaining. She learned this trick in her work as a diversity consultant, a field where her audiences often expect her to be didactic or boring.

"The phrase 'social justice'

means certain things to certain people," she explains.

"People come with those preconceived ideas."

But when the teller transports her listeners back to the segregated neighborhood where she grew up in Chicago, it never feels like a lecture.

Similarly, she has developed a line of original fables that use animal characters to deliver very human messages. "A friend of mine is an editor for a magazine called Marriage," she says.

"Each month she develops a theme. She said, 'Why don't you write a fable that goes with the theme?'"

So O'Halloran began writing a charming series of tales that, if you look closely, are about the rather grim-sounding themes like conflict-resolution and money management.

Tickets for O'Halloran's performances are \$12 for adults and \$11 for seniors, students, and children under 18. Ticket stubs will save audience members 10 percent on same-day dining at Bistro 105, The Cranberry Thistle, The Dining Room, or Main Street Café.

A detailed schedule of the 2011 Storytelling Live! season is available at [www.storytellingcenter.net](http://www.storytellingcenter.net). For more information about Storytelling Live! or to make a group reservation, call 913-1276.