

# Neighbors divided on zoning for witch

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Neighbors of a southwest DeKalb County witch say they are worried about the influence she could have on children who walk past her house every day.

"We don't want to see another Waco or Jim Jones situation over here. Children already have so many distractions," said Cleotha Griffith, director of the Love Thy Children day-care center.

"I wouldn't want to see them skip school because they're caught up in having special powers, or not being able to sleep because of something they've seen over there," she added.

Mrs. Griffith is one of several residents who oppose a zoning request to allow Lady Sintana — founder and high priestess of the Ravenwood Church and Seminary of Wicca — to use her Rainbow Drive property as a place of religious worship.

DeKalb County has told Lady Sintana she must seek the variance, but she has said she will not attend today's hearing because she only uses her house for private gatherings.

"My home is not open to the public," Lady Sintana said. "Just like with any other religion, we have prayer and meditation here sometimes."



**Lady Sintana**  
"My home is not open to the public," southwest DeKalb witch says.

Ed Durden, who lives two houses down from Lady Sintana, said there are about 30 cars at her house some evenings. He can see the robed group standing in a circle, holding candles and chanting, but the only thing that bothers him is the noise.

"They walk around clapping and beating on something," he said. "They have ceremonies almost every night real late into the night, but as long as they don't come over here, it doesn't bother me."

Lady Sintana said that her opponents have misconceptions about her religion and have denied her the opportunity to tell them about Wicca, a pagan religion that precedes Christianity.

Witches see the divinity as both God and Goddess, she said, and the religion is nature-oriented. "We don't sacrifice animals, we don't worship Satan, and we don't have wild orgies in the yard."

Willie Mahan, a senior at Southwest DeKalb High School, said residents should leave Lady Sintana alone.

"It doesn't bother me, and it shouldn't bother you that she lives there," he said. "What you believe in you should believe in strongly enough so that it won't affect you."

Staff writer Gayle White contributed to this article.