World-famous anthropologists to be parade grand marshals

Indiana Jones might not know about Fantasy Fest and its ancient apocalypse-based theme, but two internationally renowned real-world anthropologists do — and they're eager to join the celebration.

Drs. Arlen and Diane Chase, who have spent more than 25 years exploring, mapping and excavating the ancient Maya city of Caracol, will be the grand marshals of the 2012 Captain Morgan Fantasy Fest Parade.

The work of the famed specialists in anthropological archaeology has made them experts on the intriguing culture of the Maya. That, of course, makes them the perfect grand marshals — since the festival’s “A-Conch-Alypse” theme was inspired by a supposed “doomsday prophecy,” popularly credited to the Maya, predicting the world will end in December 2012.

Professors at the University of Central Florida, the Drs. Chase have been codirectors of the Caracol Archaeological Project in Belize since 1995. Each year since then, they have investigated, excavated and studied the fascinating Maya site.

Caracol was one of the largest Maya cities in Central America. The explorations of the Drs. Chase, and particularly their airborne laser terrain-mapping of the site, revealed an 80-square-mile settlement with palaces and plazas, industrial zones and suburbs, and even terraced fields and reservoirs — helping earn Caracol its place among the great cities of the Maya lowlands.

The Drs. Chase are co-authors of more than 100 articles on Caracol and the world of the Maya, as well as books including "Investigations at the Classic Maya City of Caracol, Belize" and the upcoming "Maya Archaeology: Reconstructing an Ancient Civilization."

According to Fantasy Fest director Linda O’Brien, festival organizers chose the Drs. Chase as parade grand marshals not only because of their unparalleled knowledge of Caracol and the civilization of the Maya.

"We're very excited that the Drs. Chase will be sharing the ir knowledge of the Maya with us," O'Brien stated. "We also believe that such world-renowned anthropologists will be fascinated by the unique, and occasionally peculiar, civilization of Fantasy Fest"