

A JOY TO RECEIVE Holiday Gift Ideas

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Published in the *Manitowoc Herald Times Reporter*, December 2010

Holiday shopping comes in three phases. First, there are those deals and perfect gifts one finds throughout the year . . . you know the ones, they make us feel as if, with all the holiday demands, we have a leg up on the season. Then there's the children's list, the only question that list raises what fits into the budget and whether it will still be on the list when Christmas comes. Finally, there's Uncle Herb, Grandma and Aunt Gert, the people who have given you so much throughout your life. But, casting about for gift ideas brings responses that they are down-sizing, you shouldn't fuss and you definitely shouldn't waste your money. But, it's the Holidays and what fun is that? "What they may really be telling you," notes Theresa Patrick, Community Relations Director at Shady Lane in Manitowoc, "is that if they have to store it, dust it, maintain it, or even figure it out, it is not something they would enjoy. We have found that there really a lot of wonderful gifts they would enjoy and that they are often the most creative. Better yet, they may be the most meaningful for them and for you." Here are some of the ideas Patrick has found get rave reviews.

Family event calendars are helpful, says Patrick. Sometimes older people are assumed to have bad memories but we don't realize the number of generations they are keeping track of. "Not only do they remember back three and four generations but going forward, there are children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and sometimes even great-great-grandchildren. That's a lot for anyone to keep track of." A calendar, with each birthday and anniversary marked, keeps people on top of family events. Another gift that could be given in conjunction with a calendar or as a gift of its own is greeting cards. A box of birthday, get well and sympathy cards along with a package of postage stamps helps keep people in the loop and a little stress off their budget. You may want to wrap up packets of cards ready to mail addressed, stamped and ready to mail along with a post-it giving the mailing date.

Sometimes the most precious gift is the right under our nose and that's taking time with someone you love. A book of coupons for spending time together, offers of breakfast, dinner or lunch, a ride in the country or a walk in the park is a rich gift for all of you. Often there are family photos that have not been marked. Sitting down over one or more sessions to review the pictures and mark them will not only make them meaningful and of value to the family but often photos evoke wonderful family stories to pass on. An important thing to keep in mind if you give a gift of your time or your family's time, said Patrick, is that it is a promise so be sure you follow up and make sure you don't disappoint.

Gifts of luxury are often simply a stepped-up necessity. For instance, one of the difficult things about getting older is foot care. Between bending over and trying to see your toes clearly, nail trimming can be difficult. Pedicures have become easily attainable, especially with the growing number of nail salons

popping up. It is a delicious experience, and gift certificates are a useful and welcome gifts. A professional pedicure includes being treated to a foamy foot bath, exfoliating lotions, the filing of callous build-up, cuticle trimming and nail clipping. The hardest part is choosing the nail color! But, don't think this is just a lady's gift because Dad might enjoy having his feet and toes given a tune-up as well. Other luxury gift certificates might be a gift for the hair dresser, a massage or a facial. Even when someone is living in an assisted living facility or nursing facility, there are often beauty shops and a gift certificate is good there as well.

Winter is tough on everyone's skin, however, the older you are, the faster your skin dries out in our dry Wisconsin winters. Gentle, rich lightly scented soaps, lotions and oils make bathing a treat and your gift will be appreciated long after the holidays. Lavender, rose and sandalwood are popular light fragrances. For men, sandalwood and lime are good choices. Tuck in a pair or two of socks with treads in a matching colors and you'll have the makings of a beautiful gift basket.

A movie and dinner is all the better when it's a treat. Passes for local theaters and favorite restaurants make a neat package and, if you tuck in a gas card, you'll make someone happy twice, when they open the gift and when they spend the gift certificates.

"Helping people stay in their homes is a rising trend," Patrick observed, "but sometimes the maintenance of independence is overwhelming." You may decide to offer house cleaning, up keep and yard work as a family or to save your family time and hire a house cleaning service or a lawn service to mow, rake, or weed and feed. All of these services take the stress out of maintaining independence. Other household gifts might be a birdbath heater and bird food to keep the birds well fed and the people inside well entertained by their antics. Gift subscriptions to news papers, news magazines or their local cable company are all thoughtful way to help stretch a Social Security check.