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THE REPUBLIC

Let us know what you would like to see in next year's issue. Comments can be sent to Keely Spitler, The Republic, 2980 N. National Road, Suite A, Columbus, IN 47201 or call 812-379-5624 or email kspitler@therepublic.com.

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LIVING IN THE PRESENT

Local opportunities for experiential gifts

STORY BY BARNEY QUICK | PHOTOS BY CARLA CLARK



In character as Spiderman and Batman, members of Royal Encounters, play with Beckham McIntosh, Ben Hartwell and Rhett Hartwell during a Magical Morning with a visit from the Royal Encounters on Nov. 6 at kidscommons located at 309 Washington St. in Columbus.

While much of the world thinks in terms of material objects when shopping for holiday gifts, giving experiences offers a wide range of possibilities. It's a chance to say to the recipient, "I know you. I'm familiar with what you're drawn to. Here's something that will provide lasting memories."

Several places in Columbus make such gifts possible, and the range of experiences is wide indeed.

The world of wonder inside kidscommons, located at 309 Washington Street, beckons the visitor of any age to explore all manner of fascinating subjects. It sparks one's natural curiosity about the world. This children's museum offers a number of programs and events that make excellent gifts.

A museum membership makes a great gift for a family.

Members get unlimited visits during regular hours, and discounts on rentals, camps and events.

Most pertinent to the season at hand is their event, Polar Express, which will take place from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 12. There will be stations throughout the whole museum. Every staff person will be dressed as a particular character from "The Polar Express." Kids earn tokens for interactions at the stations. For instance, there is a gift-wrapping station.

"The mindset is that they're buying something with the coins that they've earned to give to someone else," says operations manager Whitney Hartwell.



Morris Percifield watches his grandson, Gunnar Lawrence, warm-up for his drum lesson Nov. 2 at Tom Pickett's Music Center in Columbus.

Christmas Open House

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Pictured from top: Montserrat Aguilar, at left, during her violin lesson with instructor Tiffany Fu on Nov. 2 at Tom Pickett's Music Center in Columbus. // Gail Nowels, at right front, and Tina Lockhart, lead a Taiko drum class Nov. 8 at Southern Indiana Taiko, LLC in Columbus.

Other events throughout the year include Jedi Night, which is "Star Wars" themed, and two related to Halloween — a Harry Potter-themed event called Hogwort's Halloween, and Haunted Museum.

Gift cards are available online, by phone or at the museum's front desk.

Instrument lessons have been at the core of what Tom Pickett's Music Center, located at 2422 N. National





Jordan Henrichsen plays as Lolo Maignan twirls and plays the drums Nov. 8 at Southern Indiana Taiko, LLC in Columbus.

Road, is about since the late 1950s, when Tom would go door to door to drum up interest in guitar instruction. Today, he maintains a roster of teachers on instruments including guitar, bass, drums, keyboards and violin. Students are part of a lineage that includes former Vice President Mike Pence, award-winning singer songwriter Tim Grimm, and record producer Michael Clark.

There's a place in Columbus where one can learn kumi-daiko, a Japanese form of drumming played on taiko drums. Southern Indiana Taiko, located at 1130 Ruddick Avenue Suite 101, offers weekly classes for children, teens, tweens and adults, as well as family workshops and team-building events.

When a group of taiko drummers is going full-throttle, it's quite a powerful sound. People naturally fall into a group

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Jaime Mustaine, at right, shows Hope Rodmaker a brush technique during a painting event Oct. 30 at Tri State Artisans in Columbus.

“We do a lot of gift cards. This is about a chance to create memories.”

Jaime Mustaine
Instructor at Tri-State Artisans

cohesion as they coordinate their roles in it.

The facility’s director, Gail Nowels, had not had a previous interest in taiko drumming when she was first introduced to it, but quickly developed such a passion that thirteen years ago she began Southern Indiana Taiko in her basement. In January 2020, she and the other instructor, Tina Lockhart, moved into the current location.

Their activity has led to two trips to Japan. The first trip, in 2017, was the result of an invitation from a Japanese

reality-TV production company.

“They’d found video of us on the Internet,” says Nowels, “and they found it hilarious that we taped our bachi [drumsticks]. They filmed us for a week and then had a master taiko drummer come join us.”

They returned in 2018 and got to play with some drummers they’d met on their first visit.

The center has its own performance group, currently at seven members. It performs at such area events as the Columbus Ethnic Expo, the Edinburgh

Fall Festival, at workshops, and at corporate events.

Southern Indiana Taiko has gift certificates available for its activities.

Tri-State Artisans, located at 422 Washington Street, provides a number of options for recognizing someone's love of art. Every Friday and Saturday evening, it hosts Wine and Canvases events. The instructors are either proprietor Jaime Mustaine or Melissa Reardon. One can take classes in photography, watercolor, acrylic painting and drawing. In the summer, the store conducts art camps.

"We do a lot of gift cards," says Mustaine. "This is about a chance to create memories."



Angie Owensm second from right, looks on as Jaime Mustaine shows her a technique for blending the paint Oct. 30 during a painting event at Tri State Artisans in Columbus.



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A red wooden angel ornament is the central focus, hanging from a light-colored string. The angel has a circular head, outstretched wings, and a triangular body with a heart-shaped cutout. The background is a soft-focus view of a Christmas tree with green needles and warm, glowing lights.

Santa's Little Helpers

Angel Tree program offers volunteer and gift-giving opportunities

STORY BY REBECCA BERFANGER

If you've been thinking about spreading some holiday cheer throughout the community, consider supporting the Columbus Salvation Army's Angel Tree program this winter. Whether you want to buy a Christmas gift for a child or senior, donate food for a holiday meal, or volunteer your time, there are several ways to get involved in this cherished tradition of helping community members have a brighter season.

For the most part, the program helps families with children.

"The typical people are people who haven't worked regularly for the past year," says Cathy Tompkins, who coordinates the Salvation Army Angel Tree for Columbus. "I'm especially mindful of people who've had medical expenses, I'm especially careful about people who said, 'I really thought I could make it, but it's just not going to happen this year. I paid all my bills and I've done everything I could, and I just don't have enough to buy my kids things.'"

In other words, she wants to help as many people as possible, but also wants to be sure that anyone supporting the organization knows that they are trying to help those who need it the most.

"We can say to the people in the community that these are people who truly need, and you're spending your hard earned money on children who are not your own to have a good Christmas," she says.

When parents come in, she says, she will ask them for each child's age, sizes for clothes, and what they would really like for Christmas — including two gifts worth no more than \$45 each. The person who "adopts" the family can choose to buy one or both of the gifts.

They will also accept new gifts for children that aren't assigned to specific recipients — dolls and matchbox cars are often popular — which can also be distributed among the Angel Tree recipients.

"A lot of kids this year are asking for art

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supplies. I've always said when people register, we do not guarantee the quality or quantity of gifts, but they will have a nice Christmas," she says.

One of the challenges she'll face every year is that "When it comes to Angel Trees, everyone envisions a 4-year-old girl opening her gifts and squealing in delight. ... So the little boys, and teenagers, get held off until the last minute."

Even if a child's card doesn't get selected, Cathy Tompkins, along with other Salvation Army staff and volunteers, will still make sure they get a gift that's on their list.

She also says that some families who adopt Angel Tree children will try to match with children who are similar in age to their own children, or some families, friends or coworkers will decide to forego giving each other gifts, and instead pool their resources to buy gifts for an Angel Tree family. For someone looking to do that, she asks them to contact her so she can help make that connection.

The organization has also started helping seniors with the program in recent years.

"Nobody was really sure if people would want to adopt seniors," she says, "but I have had more adopters for seniors than I ever anticipated. They only get one gift, it's not their whole Christmas, but it's a nice gift."

Volunteer Kayla Ferrell also helps with the senior Angel Tree recipients.

"It's to give those residents some kind of hope and a little bit of happiness. The year 2020 took a toll on them, maybe more than anyone. They didn't see anybody, their kids didn't come to see them. We'll ask them for two gifts, \$45 in value. A lot of them ask for candles, robes, blankets, household goods. Things they couldn't buy on their limited income like a blender or a new toaster."

Additionally, says Cathy Tompkins, they've been working with prison ministries.



She will work with chaplains and sheriffs at the jails in Bartholomew County and Jennings County so that “the Prisoners — moms and dads — are allowed to ask for one gift for children. (They) do have to be their biological children or legally adopted children. ... They fill out the form, they get it back to me, I actually call the guardians of those children to say, ‘Mom wants to give Susie a barbie doll, is that ok?’ They’ll either say yes, or ‘She hasn’t played with barbie dolls for three years, but she would like ABC.’ We put those as single gifts on the Angel Trees, so the (children) will get those. We send a card with the gift. It’s not meant to be the whole Christmas, just a reminder of their mom or dad who can’t be there.”

Once all of the gifts are bought, ideally no later than Dec. 12, they have to be stored and sorted. This is where volunteers can be helpful, says Cathy Tompkins.

While it’s usually a trickle of gifts in

November, says Columbus Salvation Army Capt. Amy Tompkins, “in December, they really start to come in. So in December is when we need the most help.”

The gifts lead up to this year’s distribution date of Dec. 17 — which gives volunteers a few days to sort and check all of the boxes and bags before families pick them up at the mall.

“We like to do it when the kids are at school, that way the parents get the gifts and they can wrap them or hide them so they really feel like they’re the ones giving the kids the gifts and not an agency. We try to make it a surprise for them,” says Amy Tompkins. “Then on Distribution Day, because of where we are at the mall, now they’re going to have to walk through the mall with the gifts. So we’ll need people to help the clients out to their cars. So that would be a great day for people to come and help.”

In addition to gifts, parents also receive wrapping paper to be able to wrap the gifts.

She adds set up, clean up and break down are also ways volunteers can help on that particular day.

The families will also get a basket of food to prepare a holiday meal, another task where volunteers can step in. Those baskets are distributed at the Salvation Army’s offices in order to keep perishable foods refrigerated.

To volunteer, call or text Cathy Tompkins on her cell phone: 812-764-0200.

“They can even call on the 14th or 15th of December,” says Cathy Tompkins. “If I’m desperate at the toy shop, and they want to come over, I will be their new best friend.”

“The reward for getting involved with Angel Tree is beyond measure,” says Ferrell. “To see parents come pick up their gifts, there is nothing like it. Getting involved with Senior Angel Tree, it just warms your heart.”

Angel Trees will be available around Columbus in November and December, including Kroger, Walmart, Woodforest Bank and The Ark Christian Bookstore.

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PERFECT PRESENT

Can't miss gift strategies for the people who matter

BY ERIC J. MARTIN

Whether you're shopping online or at a brick-and-mortar store, it's easy to get bogged down by one of the most common predicaments consumers face during the holiday season: How to buy the ideal present for a family member, relative, friend, or coworker. With so many gift ideas to choose from and much guesswork involved when it comes to the recipient's tastes and preferences, it's little wonder why Americans feel stressed at this time of year.

"Last-minute planning and shopping can result in crowds, higher exposure to germs, a shortage of inventory, and an increase in tension. Walking aimlessly around the mall looking for the perfect gift is not a good use of time, in my opinion," says Kristan Fazio, fair trade advocate for WorldFinds in Westmont, Illinois. "Plus, with the delays in shipping due to COVID and Postal Service cutbacks experienced this year, the challenge will be greater than ever in November and December."

For these and other reasons, Dr. Carissa Coulston, a clinical psychologist in Manhattan, New York, and a relationship expert at Eternityrose.com, recommends gift planning well in advance.

"It's a good idea to put in the effort and step up your game by carefully looking around before the holiday season, if possible. If you are aware of what caught the eye or attention of one of your recipients, this can be a great way to guide your gift buying," Coulston says. "Remember that, especially for men, last-minute shopping can seriously backfire, as women can instinctively tell if a gift came with a lot of planning and care or was bought in a rush."

Here's some handy advice from experts on how to buy for different types of people in your life this season.

For a spouse/partner

"I recommend curating an experience that you can do together, such as taking a cooking class or getting a couples massage," says Julie Schechter, a gifting expert and award-winning founder of Small Packages in New York City. "This sends the message that you're excited not just to celebrate the holidays with them, but that you also can't wait to carve out dedicated time for the two of you in the future."

Fazio suggests picking something creative and meaningful, such as handmade artwork, "especially when photos are included. Every year, I make a photo album of special family moments, and it's definitely a favorite gift," she says.

Don't be afraid to ask your main squeeze for hints, either.

"Sometimes, simply asking and/or talking about what your partner may want can put you on the right path toward the perfect gift," notes Parker Slavin, CEO/president of Los Angeles-based StationeryXpress.

For a child

Buyers often experience a special kind of anxiety when they are tasked with finding the ultimate toy or other age-appropriate gift for a young one.

"I like to be a little sneaky and ask the child to help me pick a gift for them by saying I am hunting for a present for a different child who is a year older than they are. I find they will usually spill what's on their mind instead," Schechter says.

Fazio prefers gifting items that educate as well as excite kids.

"This could be a book on gardening accompanied by a basket of seeds, or

equipment for a new hobby, such as a musical instrument along with a couple of lessons," she says.

Ask Slavin and he'll say that the gift should make the child feel special or important.

"It shouldn't be too complex or overly expensive, as most younger kids don't quite understand the concept of money and taking care of nice things just yet," adds Slavin.

Of course, it pays to keep your finger on the pulse of the latest toy trends and know what's in stock and available.

For a parent

When planning for a mom or dad gift, think about something they can use and enjoy at the stage of life they are in.

"A great gift for a parent is something they can use for multiple occasions," Slavin advises.

That can mean personalized stationery, stylish new clothing, or a gift subscription to a favorite magazine.

"My parents' favorite holiday gift I gave them was a monthly delivery of hand-made ice cream. Fortunately, I live close to my folks, so not only did they enjoy a delicious pint but they were able to spend time with their favorite daughter when the ice cream arrived," says Fazio.

Parents often remarked that they "don't want anything." What they really often desire is time spent with you.

"If plane tickets aren't an option, or you're already local, try a technical solution, such as a digital picture frame preloaded with all the photos they'll love so they can just turn it on and enjoy. If you have kids, a wall calendar with photos of them is always a hit," recommends Schechter.

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WINTER GETAWAY

Plan ahead for this year's holiday vacation

BY FAMILY FEATURES

Whether your family counts a holiday vacation among your treasured traditions or you're anticipating a holiday getaway for the first time, getting an early start on your planning can help ensure your trip is filled with good tidings and joy.

■ **Know what you want to spend.** If you're planning to open your wallet a little wider for this trip than you have in the past, you're not alone. A survey by American Express Travel found more than 60% of travelers are planning to spend more on trips in 2021 since they missed out on travel in 2020. Setting your budget now can help you make choices about things like accommodations and activities while giving you some extra time to save. Working off a budget from the start can also help you take advantage of book now, pay later options that may give you added savings or incentives.

■ **Be conscious of high-demand destinations.** Popular travel spots tend to fill up fast, so if you're considering visiting a high-demand location, be aware of how crowds

might affect your plans for everything from wait times at attractions to rental cars and more. According to vacation rental company Vrbo, prime warm-weather destinations where families can spend the holidays together are already facing lower availability for homes, including Florida and Hawaii beaches. Similarly, Maui, Hawaii, has less than 20% of homes available during Christmas week. Ski spots also see a large share of holiday travel, so be prepared if you're planning on a holiday hot spot.

■ **Manage against the unexpected.** Despite all the advantages of planning ahead, it's impossible to predict unknown variables like the weather when you make travel arrangements months ahead of time. Travel insurance can help protect the majority your investment if you have to cancel your trip. Some policies offer coverage for cancellation for any reason, so you'll want to research exactly what your policy allows, including weather and pandemic-related cancellations.


■ **Book lodging early.** With travel volume

up and availability for accommodations already trending downward for the holiday season, consider making reservations sooner than later.

"We typically see December bookings peak in October and November, but families are locking in their holiday vacation plans much earlier than usual," said Melanie Fish, Vrbo's travel expert. "Vacation homes have been quickly scooped up during every popular travel season this year, so it's no surprise families are planning ahead to ensure they have a great place to spend the holidays together."

■ **Look into local events.** In this pandemic age, many attractions and activities have new guidelines, including altered operating schedules, occupancy limits and reservation systems. You can typically find the latest information on websites or by calling ahead. Take these measures into consideration as you're creating your trip itinerary and organizing advanced reservations.

For more inspiration for your holiday getaway, visit Vrbo.com.



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BY LISA LANKFORD

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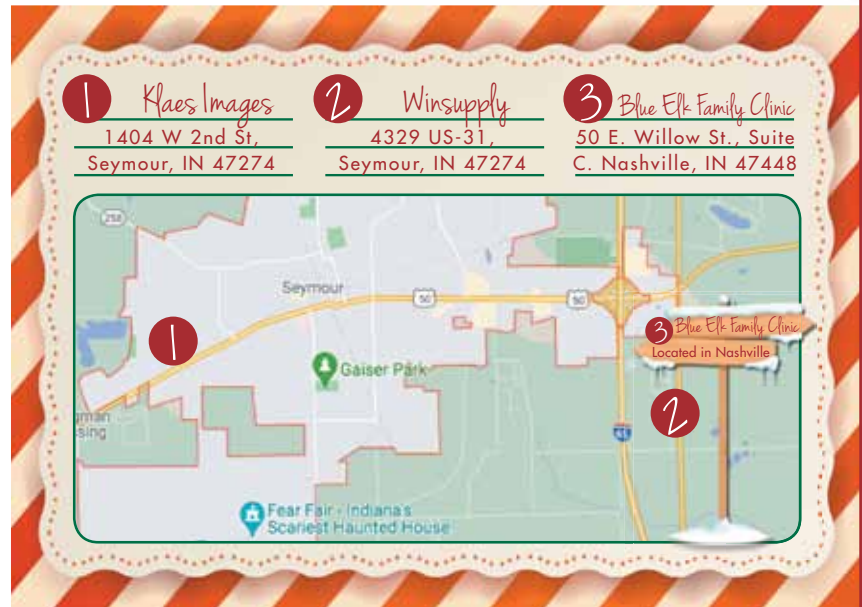
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Ask any pre-teen, tween and teen what they want for the holidays and most will probably respond, “a gift card.” In 2018, consumers spent more than \$130 billion on gift cards per year, according to advisory company CEB TowerGroup, but it said roughly \$1 billion went unspent. Sometime those gift cards get lost in your wallet.

If you’re tired of buying such an impersonal gift, but want to please the youngster in your life, there are alternatives.

1. Give an experience

“Buying gifts for the gift card generation requires a little thought,” says Cherie Corso, parenting expert. “Teens today like ‘experience gifts’ so instead of a gift card, buy them tickets to a concert or show or event.”

Corso also explains that many parents are remembering to include the friends as well, organizing groups of children to go to concerts as holiday gifts instead of just purchasing one ticket for the child.

2. Think out-of-the-box

Well, out of their room, that is. Kids don’t typically buy things that mom and dad supply such as pictures and bedding, etc.

“Teens like these items because it’s fun to do a mini-bedroom makeover,” Corso says. “Some gift examples include a fuzzy pillow, picture, bean bag, a cool makeup mirror and artwork for their wall.”

Corso says to remember that today’s teens also enjoy status items they can post photos of on Instagram.

“Gift cards are fun but not as much fun as seeing Justin Bieber or posting a photo with your new designer purse,” Corso says.

3. Think charitable

“Instead of going holiday shopping this year, go holiday ‘giving’ by choosing gifts that benefit children and families in need from around the world,” says Christine Connolly Bell, Public Relations Manager at World Vision. “A retail gift card gives a pre-teen, teen or college student pleasure for a short period of time, but a charitable gift, like a child sponsorship through World



Vision, ensures that the young person learns about and stays connected with important global issues.”

Through World Vision’s #GenerosityEffect movement, your teen will go online and send a stuffed goat to a friend. “We’ll match that gift with a real goat sent to a family in need,” Bell says. “The chain reaction of generosity will be viewable online through a tracking tool — truly bringing the gift’s impact to life and showing each individual’s influence.”

4. Think indie

Despite the perception that nobody — especially young people — reads today, Nicole Brinkley, an independent bookseller and founder of YA Interrobang, says kids and teens today are reading more than ever, between the stories available on their phones and the hardcovers they collect for their shelves.

“We see this in the success of events like BookCon and subscription boxes like Parnassus’s ParnassusNext book box,” she says. “ParnassusNext sends a first-edition signed YA hardcover to its teen subscribers once a month.”

She also suggests that if you have to buy a gift card, buy one to an independent bookstore, where they can use the card in-person or online. “With this and ParnassusNext subscriptions, it keeps kids and teens actively reading and excited to build their own little library.”

5. Think gift cards

Wait, what? We just said to think about ideas other than gift cards, but it is still OK to give some out.

“These days, gift cards and eGifts are the norm, but that doesn’t mean they have to be boring,” says Elisabeth Vezzani, the CEO and co-founder of Sugarwish, an online candy store where recipients purchase the candy they want with their gift card.

Vezzani explains that many e-gifts and some gift cards provide an interactive experience, not just a purchase.

“This allows them to compete with traditional gifts in a way that they never could before,” she said. “This gifting trend is all about keeping it simple for the buyer while delighting the recipient in unexpected ways ... and these are exactly the types of gifts that today’s teens are looking for.”

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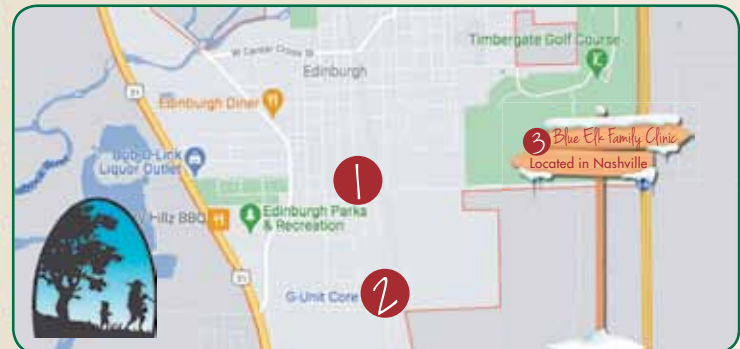


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SMALL REWARDS

The gift-giver's guide to shopping local

BY JESSICA ROYER OCKEN

The Internet is always there, lurking. It couldn't be easier to click a few buttons and have life's essentials arrive at your door. These days, local businesses don't just compete with big boxes and department stores, they compete with everything on the World Wide Web.

But choosing gifts for people — selecting something perfectly matched to personality and preferences, that adequately conveys your love and appreciation for them — can

be trickier than making sure another case of paper towels arrives before the last one runs out.

"What are your goals for this purchase?" Heidi Butzine, founder of ShopLocal.us and author of "Shop Local: A Practical, Pain-Free Guide to Shopping With a Purpose," suggests you ask yourself. "Do you just want something as cheap as you can get it?"

If we're not careful, holiday shopping

becomes merely one more task to be completed at our desks — another workload piled on top of everything else we have to do at this busy time of year.

So why not try something different? Step away from the screen and make shopping an experience this year, and a pleasant experience at that. "It feels good to get out of your office, away from the computer," Butzine says. "Take a break and engage with people at a local store."

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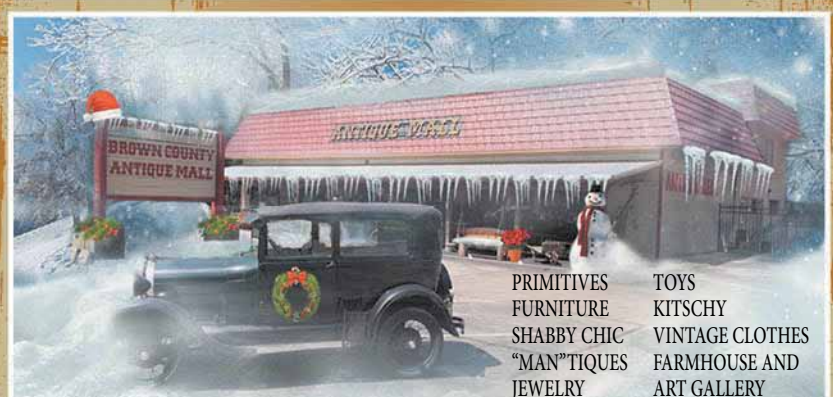
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The benefits of this approach are not just for you. You'll also be supporting your community, as well as delighting those on your gift list.

When it comes to shopping local, there's plenty of reward to go around.

For your community

Shopping at local stores is "the gift that keeps on giving," says Bill Brunelle, executive director of Independent We Stand, an organization dedicated to educating consumers and businesses about the economic benefits of buying local. When you purchase something at a locally owned business, more of your money stays in the community, he explains. It's not going out of town to a big-box corporate office. Store owners based in the community are also more likely to hire local accountants and marketing firms, as well as source more of the products they sell locally. "It's really a multiplier effect," he says. "The money keeps recirculating."

Why is that important? Think about how local stores contribute to the fabric of your community, suggests Kathleen McHugh, president of The American Specialty Toy Retailing Association (ASTRA). The toy store in town might be where parents bring their kids for a craft class, or where they know they can pick up a last-minute gift that will be wrapped for them, or where they go when the baseball team needs a sponsor.

Independent stores' distinctive presence gives your city character and make it a special place to live. "The guy across the counter may be a second-generation employee, and he's been on the school board," Brunelle says. "He's got a true vested interest in the community."

For your recipient

America has become a bit of a "throwaway society," Brunelle says. "Once something doesn't work, it goes in the landfill, and you get what you pay for sometimes." But the holidays are the

perfect time to break out of this mode.

"When you're looking for a gift that will make someone feel good, buy something unique, something they don't have in big boxes or national chains."

When you take the time to find something special, you're giving the person some of yourself, Butzine notes. Perhaps the gift will represent where you live. Butzine lives on the ocean, so she sometimes chooses artwork or a photo of the beach for landlocked friends. "Your gift can remind them of you or provide an escape," she says. "Gift giving is so individualized. You just need to stop and think."

If you're shopping locally, you don't have to think alone. "You can go into a local toy store and talk to someone who's really well trained in child development," McHugh says. Just give them the child's age, and you can likely walk out with the perfect present. "That's priceless — there's no guessing!"

Plus, you can select from more than just the latest mass-produced toys and games. You'll get a range of creative, open-ended playthings. "It's not about what the toy does, but what the child does with this toy," McHugh says. "If a kid can find a million ways to play with the same toy, you've hit the jackpot."

In the same way, the bookseller in town may suggest local or regional authors you haven't heard of, the local boutique may have clothing or jewelry by designers you might otherwise miss, and the music store down the street may have cutting-edge tunes by independent artists, plus a great selection of vintage vinyl, these experts say.

For yourself

"The holidays get so stressful, but try to look at your shopping as a fun, meaningful opportunity," Butzine says. It can make you feel good to find something you know a person on your list will love.

Try to enjoy the process rather than making it a mad dash to buy stuff. Try the "Shop Local Loop," she suggests. Work your

way through the neighborhood stores in a 1- to 5-mile radius of where you live.

You'll likely be rewarded with unusual and offbeat gift options, as well as more knowledgeable employees and perhaps even the store owner in person. "I like to touch everything," McHugh says. "When you shop in person you get it right the first time. There's no being surprised and having to return things."

This heightened level of customer service can help when buying for someone you don't know so well: grandparents who aren't as in touch with what kids are doing at a certain age, people who don't have kids but want to wow their nieces and nephews, you with that one enigmatic sister-in-law. "When you show up with the best gift, you win the day," McHugh says.

Shopping local can even help you conquer the most difficult holiday gift list challenge of all: the co-worker. Choose a gift card for an area restaurant, Butzine suggests. Then you're giving something you know will be convenient, as well as supporting a local business, and you and the recipient could even go there together. And for the person who doesn't need any more stuff, a donation to a local charity — in your area or theirs — may be just the thing. "That's a nice way of getting around the idea that a gift must be something tangible," Butzine says.

Finally, once you've found that perfect item — the chocolates made by a local confectioner, the sweater from a family that's been knitting for generations, a toy that will entertain for hours — be sure you share your experience with the recipient, too. Rather than just slapping a tag on the package, add a card that tells the gift's story: who made it, why you chose it, how you found it. "A personal note saying how much fun you had picking out their gift lets them know the thoughtfulness involved," Butzine says. "It lets them know this is heartfelt."

After all, that is the goal of holiday gift giving.

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How to make the holidays less stressful

BY FAMILY FEATURES

Between changes in routine and visiting family (or having them visit you), the holidays can be emotionally overwhelming for children and adults alike, even in “normal times.” Add in inclement weather, the desire for a perfect holiday and parents still working, and you have a perfect cocktail for emotional meltdowns.

“The key to enjoying whatever this holiday season brings is to acknowledge the range of emotions the entire family may be feeling and hold space for those feelings,” said Ariel Acosta from KinderCare’s Inclusion Services team. “By working on a few key things now before the heightened expectations and busyness set in, families can build a toolbox of skills that will help make the season less stressful for everyone.”

Consider these tips to help families prepare for a less stressful holiday season.

■ Find ways to destress as a family — Throw on some music and have a dance party. Incorporate some simple yoga moves or stretches into your day to create mindful moments. Help your children create a list of calm-down techniques to choose from when they start to become overwhelmed or as a way to reset after an outburst, such as taking a deep breath.

■ Set expectations for greetings — Talk with your children about your family’s expectations around greetings and help them think of and practice different ways to say hello, such as a hug, handshake, high-five, wave or verbal greeting. Giving your children options ahead of time allows them to choose

the greeting that feels most comfortable in the moment. To lessen the pressure, make sure family members and friends understand what you and your children are comfortable with. For example, “It looks like Zazil doesn’t want a hug right now, Auntie Mei. Perhaps a high-five would be better.”

■ Give your children (and yourself) grace — Talk with your children about the range of emotions you feel throughout the day. This can help them learn emotional literacy and flexible thinking. It also normalizes feelings. When a big feeling does happen, remember to connect before you correct by labeling and validating your child’s emotions: “I can see that you’re really sad we have to leave the party. Leaving makes me feel sad, too. What would help you feel better?”



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HOLIDAY RECIPES



Centerpieces for your celebration

BY FAMILY FEATURES

Rum and Cola Holiday Ham

Recipe courtesy of Omaha Steaks Executive Chef David Rose

Prep time: 30 minutes

Cook time: 80 minutes

Servings: 10-12

Ham:	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup cola
1 Omaha Steaks Spiral-Sliced Ham (8 pounds)	2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
Glaze:	1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1 cup cherry fruit spread	$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon kosher salt
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup dark spiced rum	

To make ham: Thaw frozen ham in refrigerator 24-48 hours.

Remove from refrigerator and let ham come to room temperature, about 30-45 minutes.

Preheat oven to 325 F. Remove ham from foil and film. Return ham to foil wrapping and place in oven-safe roasting pan. Roll foil down leaving 2 inches of foil around bottom of ham.

Place roasting pan with ham in oven on lower rack and heat uncovered 60-75 minutes, until ham starts to brown. While ham cooks, make glaze.

To make glaze: In medium saucepot, whisk fruit spread, rum, cola, Worcestershire sauce, Dijon mustard and salt until well incorporated. Bring to boil then reduce heat to medium. Simmer over medium heat 10 minutes then remove from heat. Cool to room temperature.

During last 15 minutes of cooking, glaze ham every 5 minutes.

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Dijon-Herb Prime Rib Roast with Garlic Butter Mushrooms

Recipe courtesy of Omaha Steaks Executive Chef David Rose

Prep time: 15 minutes | **Cook time:** 3 hours | **Servings:** 4-6

Dijon-Herb Rub:

- ¼ cup minced fresh Italian parsley
- ¼ cup minced fresh oregano
- ¼ cup minced fresh thyme leaves
- ¼ cup minced fresh rosemary leaves
- 3 fresh garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- ½ cup canola oil
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon smoked paprika

Prime Rib Roast:

- 1 Omaha Steaks Boneless Heart of Prime Rib Roast (4 pounds), thawed
- Kosher salt, to taste

Ground black pepper, to taste

¼ cup canola oil

Garlic Butter Mushrooms:

- 6 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ cup small diced yellow onion
- 4 fresh garlic cloves, minced
- 1 pound button mushrooms, cleaned and quartered
- 1 pinch kosher salt, plus additional, to taste, divided
- 1 pinch ground black pepper, plus additional, to taste, divided
- ½ cup chicken stock
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ¼ cup finely chopped Italian parsley

BY FAMILY FEATURES

To make rub: In medium bowl, whisk parsley, oregano, thyme, rosemary, garlic, Dijon mustard, oil, salt, black pepper and paprika until well incorporated.

To make prime rib roast: Pat prime rib roast dry on all sides with paper towels. Season generously with salt and pepper, to taste. Allow roast to come to room temperature about 30 minutes.

Rub Dijon herb rub all over prime rib roast and allow to stand 10 minutes.

Preheat oven to 250 F.

In large cast-iron pan, warm oil over medium-high heat. Sear roast on all sides until golden brown, 2-3 minutes per side.

Place seared prime rib on wire rack-lined sheet pan and place in oven.

Cook until internal temperature is 10 F below desired

cooking doneness.

Rest 15-20 minutes before slicing.

To make mushrooms: In large pan, warm olive oil over medium-high heat. Add diced onions and saute about 1 minute.

Add minced garlic and lightly saute until fragrant, about 20 seconds.

Add mushrooms and pinch of salt and ground pepper to pan. Saute 3-4 minutes, or until mushrooms are tender.

Add chicken stock and reduce to one-third in volume, 3-4 minutes.

Add butter and parsley to pan and saute until butter is melted and incorporated. Immediately remove from heat and season, to taste, with salt and pepper.

Serve mushrooms with prime rib roast.

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BY FAMILY FEATURES/CULINARY.NET

Sweet Cranberry Sauce

Prep time: 2 minutes

Cook time: 10 minutes

Servings: 8

12 ounces cranberries

1 cup granulated sugar

¼ cup orange juice

½ cup water

1 ½ tablespoons ginger paste

⅛ tablespoon salt

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

2 tablespoons orange zest

Vanilla ice cream (optional)

In large skillet over medium heat, combine cranberries, sugar, orange juice, water, ginger paste, salt, ground cinnamon and orange zest.

Bring to simmer. Stir until thickened to desired consistency, 15 minutes.

Cool 30 minutes. Transfer to bowl. Cover and refrigerate 30 minutes. Serve alone or over vanilla ice cream, if desired.



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SWEET TREATS

Easy holiday recipe to make with some little helpers

Among the decorations, gifts and gatherings of loved ones, there's perhaps nothing quite like family favorite foods that call to mind the joy of the holidays. Whether your loved ones relish building gingerbread houses or dining on an all-in feast, looking forward to annual traditions is part of what makes the season so special.

This year, you can add to the fun with a new annual activity by creating a delightful dessert with the help of little ones and adults alike. With an easy recipe like Peanut Butter Saltine Candy that calls for just a handful of ingredients, you can get the whole family involved in the kitchen.

Ask your little helpers to measure out ingredients while a grownup prepares the pan and uses the stove. Once the base is finished baking, call the kids back to sprinkle chocolate chips and peanut butter chips over the top.

Find more holiday recipes at gapeanuts.com.

Peanut Butter Saltine Candy

Yield: 45 pieces

Nonstick cooking spray (butter flavor)

1 sleeve (4 ounces) regular saltine crackers

1/2 cup butter

3/4 cup creamy peanut butter

1 cup granulated sugar

2 cups milk chocolate chips

1/2 cup peanut butter chips

1/2 cup rough chopped, dry roasted peanuts

Preheat oven to 400 F. Line 10-by-15-by-1-inch pan with aluminum foil. Spray foil with nonstick cooking spray then lay saltines flat in single layer on prepared pan. Set aside.

In heavy duty, 1-quart saucepan over medium heat, combine butter, peanut butter and sugar. Stir constantly until butter and sugar are melted, bringing mixture to boil. Boil 3 minutes, stirring frequently. Pour cooked mixture over saltines and bake 5 minutes.

Remove from oven and sprinkle chocolate chips over saltines. Let cool 3 minutes then spread melted chocolate completely over saltines.

Sprinkle peanut butter chips evenly over chocolate. Return pan to oven 1 minute to soften chips. Pull pointed tines of fork through softened peanut butter chips to partially cover chocolate. Sprinkle chopped peanuts on top, gently pressing into candy.

Let cool on rack about 15 minutes then place in freezer 3 minutes. Remove from freezer and break into pieces. Store in airtight container.

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