



KEEPING HOLIDAY SPENDING AT HOME

By Lorraine Payette

Whether you live in a huge metropolis, a tiny backwater town, or even so far off the grid that your neighbour's house is more of a fairy story in the back of your mind than a reality, this is a time not only of spiritual celebration and contemplation, but of giving. Every year we go out seeking the perfect gift, something that will truly light up the eyes, mind and heart of the receiver.

What if you could give gifts that would benefit your entire community, gifts with meaning and substance that help others as well as being for a special person?

Every community is filled with hard working, dedicated people who would love to be part of your gift giving plans. Each time you purchase services locally, especially from the small owner run businesses in your community, you provide work for people who live where you live, shop where you shop, worship where you worship, whose kids attend school with your kids. It is time for communities to be helping communities, and to stop waiting for government and big commerce to pull us out of our rut.

Check with local craftspeople and artisans for the perfect gift, whether it be a hand-knit garment from homespun wool; novel jams, jellies or preserves; farm fresh soaps; artisanal breads and baked goods; innovative furnishings; or exquisite works of art, to liven up the home environment.

Attend the flea markets, rummage sales, and craft fairs throughout your area to find treasures you might never have known existed. Think small owner operated business before large chain franchise, and see how many people in your neighbourhood can benefit from that simple decision.

Visit owner operated restaurants in the area and partake of their specialties. Then go out to a great show. Whether you attend a play at the community theatre, a performance of the Nutcracker by local children, or listen to your favourite music by a hometown band, there's plenty of great live entertainment.

The possibilities are endless, from home spun wisdom and craftiness, through giving generous tips to those who serve us everyday and get so little recognition for all they do. It all starts with just looking at things a bit differently, of

bringing the holidays home instead of the other way around.

Think gym memberships, gift certificates (whether individual or in books) for car detailing, driveway sealing, lawn mowing, driveway plowing, cleaning sidewalks, even a few rounds of golf at the local golf course.

Maybe you'd rather look at giving a nice dinner out at a locally owned restaurant, or even a few breakfasts at McDonald's or Tim Horton's (who hire many people in the different communities) as a break for the household cook. Perhaps an in-home catered meal, with maid service for a day or carpet steaming. Perhaps chimney cleaning would be exactly the right gift for that someone special on your list.

Every car owner needs the regular oil change, tune up, or some other form of maintenance. The same goes for all of our computers, and most of our household appliances and heating systems.

The possibilities are endless. Every dollar you put into the local economy is a seed that grows more dollars, contributing to the joy of the season for everyone. This year, let's make our gifts wonderful for all.

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