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November 2024

Holiday

GIFT GUIDE



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Parade of Lights coming to village

Scheduled to roll through Malone on Nov. 30

By ALEXANDER VIOLO

aviolo@mtelegram.com

MALONE — Two days after Thanksgiving the seventh annual Parade of Lights will roll through the village, helping to kick off the holiday season in Franklin County.

Malone's parade will start at 5 p.m., on Saturday, Nov. 30, according to Carrie Robinson, the parade's founder and organizer.

Robinson said the event will start with a tree lighting, at the Franklin County Fairgrounds, followed by the parade.

"At about five minutes to five I will go live on the parade Facebook page," she said, "Santa and Mrs. Claus will come and light the tree on live. I try to get a lot of people who are on the side of the street to join that so they can see the tree lighting."

The parade sets out from the Franklin County Courthouse and ends at the fairgrounds, according to Robinson.

"After the tree lighting Santa is whisked up to the courthouse, the tail-end of the parade and the parade starts at the courthouse and goes all the way down into the fairgrounds," she said.

Lineup for the evening's parade will begin at 4 p.m., in the courthouse's parking lot.

Robinson said after Santa passes by vehicles are welcome to join the parade's procession.

"I tell everybody on my live and I am going to be live on my page a lot in the next week-and-a-half but after Santa goes by they can join the line of traffic and they will drive in through the fairgrounds," she said, "It's a drive through event again. It's easier on us than having 3 to 4,000 people at the fairgrounds."

Robinson said gift bags will be given out to kids at the drive through event.

During the parade Robinson said she will walk through the village while broadcasting on Facebook live.

"I walk towards uptown because the excitement of knowing that the parade is coming



This year's Christmas tree at the Franklin County Fairgrounds was donated by William Menke. The tree will be lit up at the start of the Parade of Lights on Saturday, Nov. 30. Provided photo

kills me and gives me a chance to interact with the people who are on the street, which is super fun for me," she said, "Seeing kids reactions when the floats go by is pretty special."

Robinson said people from all over the country watch the parade on Facebook live, and added that funds raised by this year's parade will go to support Homeward Bound Adirondacks, a veterans retreat off of State Route 30 in the Lake Titus area of Malone.

"I got to tour the property, they gave me a tour and showed me what they have planned for the future," she said.

Robinson said she got the idea of donating to the veterans group after being approached by Moira's American Legion after last year's parade.

"Anything above and beyond

what it costs to put the parade on will be going to Homeward Bound Adirondacks this year," she said.

Robinson said she continues to put on the parade to give the community a chance to celebrate the holidays.

"When I was growing up we had Winter Carnival and there always seemed to be something and those are memories that I have that are really special to me," she said.

Robinson said last weekend the Christmas tree that will be lit on the night of the parade was put up at the fairgrounds.

According to Robinson, this year the tree was donated by William Menke.

"Every year our tree is donated, donated by someone in the



Carrie Robinson, the Parade of Lights founder and organizer, said this year's Christmas tree is about 30-feet tall. Provided photo

See PARADE T20

Santa visiting Arsenal Green Park



A local youngster had a chat with Santa Clause at the Arsenal Green Park in Malone last year. The Malone Chamber of Commerce has invited Santa back this year and he'll be at the park on Main Street on December 7 from 1:00 to 3:00pm. Santa will arrive by a Malone Call Firemen firetruck, escorted by the Malone Village Police.

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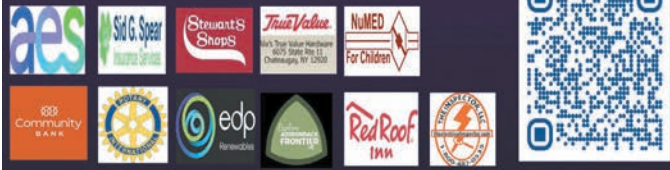
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HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

Nov. 27

Malone
Friends-Giving Party: 6 p.m. **Wednesday, Nov. 27**, Shooters Lounge, 578 E. Main St. Food, music, dancing.
Community Thanksgiving eve worship: 6 p.m. **Wednesday, Nov. 27**, St. Dismas Village Church, 432 E. Main St.

Nov. 28

Thanksgiving Day

Malone
Thanksgiving dinner: With Franklin County Office for the Aging, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. **Thursday, Nov. 28**, Malone Adult Center, 14906 Route 30. Menu: Turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, vegetable, roll, and pumpkin delight dessert. Dine in or takeouts; for those 60 and older. Cost: \$2 suggested donation. Information, reservations: 518-481-1526.
Adirondack for Kids 5K Turkey Trot: 10 a.m. **Thursday, Nov. 28**, Arsenal Green. Tickets: www.mountainmartstores.com/adirondack-for-kids.

SaranacLake
Thanksgiving buffet: 2 to 8 p.m. **Thursday, Nov. 28**, The Belvedere, 102 Bloomingdale Ave. Cost: \$40; 5 to 14, \$17; 4 and younger, free. Takeouts available. Information, reservations: 518-354-5402.

Nov. 30

Malone
Holly jolly holiday craft fair: House of History, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. **Saturday, Nov. 30**, Malone Middle School, 15 Francis St.
Foothills Art Society gift shop: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. **Saturdays, Nov. 30, Dec. 7, 14 and 21**, Foothills Art Society, 43 Pearl St. Local artist creations.

Dec. 1

Malone
39th annual ecumenical Christmas concert: Hospice of the North Country, 4 p.m. **Sunday, Dec. 1**, Centenary United Methodist Church, 345 W. Main St. Cost: \$10; 10 and younger, free. Benefits Hospice. Information: Cathlyn Lamitie, 518-483-3200.

Dec. 2

Malone
Magical red mailbox delivery: Mr. and Mrs. Clause, 5:30 p.m. **Monday, Dec. 2**, Village of Malone Office, 343 W. Main St. Hosted by Elves on Main; bring letters for Santa Claus; pictures; cookies and hot cocoa.

Dec. 7

Burke
Christmas with Almanzo: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. **Saturday, Dec. 7**, Almanzo Wilder Homestead, 177 Stacy Road. Traditional holiday cheer; chapter readings of “Farmer Boy Christmas,” visitor center and gift shop open; children’s holiday crafts; free.
Malone
Annual Christmas tea: Noon to 4 p.m. **Saturday, Dec. 7**, Franklin County Historical and Museum Society, 51 Milwaukee St. Music, tea or cider, gift shop, bake sale.
Live nativity: 4 to 7 p.m. **Saturday, Dec. 7**, Malone Wesleyan Church, 76 Finney Blvd. Free.

Dec. 13

Malone
Ugly sweater Christmas party: 9:30 p.m. **Friday, Dec. 13**, Shooters Lounge, 578 E. Main St.
SaranacLake
Winter concert: Nothern Lights Choir, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. **Friday, Dec. 13**, St. Bernard’s Church, 27 St. Bernard St. Cost: \$15.

Dec. 14

Malone
10th annual Winter Wonderland craft and vendor show: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. **Saturday, Dec. 14**, Davis Elementary School, 183 Webster St. Hosted by Queen Beanie Hats; benefits Emmaus Soup Kitchen, Malone.

Dec. 15

Plattsburgh
Breakfast with Santa and Mrs. Claus: 8 to 10 a.m. **Sunday, Dec. 15**, Plattsburgh.

Christmas reading at Wilder Farm



Pictured is Teri Weston reading the Christmas chapter from Laura Ingalls Wilder’s book ‘Farmer Boy’ as Isaiah Kingsley, Honorary Almanzo for that year, acts out the scene for a group of children at the Wilder Homestead in Burke at a past holiday event. Christmas With Almanzo will take place this year on December 7 from 11:00am to 3:00 pm. The historical site will open the house for Christmas chapter readings, carol singing, mulled cider and treats. The Visitor Center with museum and gift shop will also be open with children’s holiday crafts. Chapter readings will begin at 11:15 am, 12:00, 12:45, 1:30, and 2:15pm. Details are at www.almanzowilderfarm.com.

House of History annual celebration



A young visitor to the Franklin County House of History checks out one of the decorations on a tree displayed at a past Christmas Tea event. This annual event will take place this year on December 7 from 12:00-4:00 pm at 31 Milwaukee Street, Malone. The public is welcome to attend at no charge to enjoy holiday music and refreshments.

10th annual Winter Wonderland Craft Show

The public is welcome to attend the 10th annual David Sauter Memorial Winter Wonderland Craft Show on December 14 from 9:00am to 3:00pm at Davis Elementary School in Malone. This annual event is a fundraiser for the Emmaus Soup Kitchen. There will be over 100 crafters, direct sale vendors and artisans, as well as baked goods for last minute holiday gift shopping. Lunch will be available, along with a holiday auction featuring dozens of local business donations, and a 50-50 raffle. Attendees are invited to bring donations of meal ingredient items. Co-organizer, Aimee Marshall

notes, " Supporting this event is your chance to pay it forward and give back to an organization that has been an existence since 1992 serving patrons from across the North Country!! Why is this event so important to us? It is because we receive no outside funding of any kind! This large craft show fundraiser raises all the monies the soup kitchen uses to buy meal ingredients, etc. for the whole year. Hope to see you there!" The Emmaus Soup Kitchen is located 227 West Main Street in Malone. They serve a hot meal every Tuesday from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm throughout the year



How to master the art of last-minute shopping

Metro

Shoppers who wait until the eleventh hour to do their holiday shopping are in good company. Consolidated Credit says one in five shoppers waits until December to start grabbing holiday gifts. Although shopping early to land the best deals and avoid the stress of running out of time works for many people, there are those who do their best work when shopping is down to the wire. If you're thinking of being a last-minute Larry or Lucy in regard to your holiday shopping, there are some ways to make late shopping successful.

¥ Don't downplay the power of gift cards. Some suggest that a gift card isn't an ideal gift because it doesn't require much thought or effort. But the numbers do not lie. A research report from the Retail Gift Card Association notes that 71 percent of people surveyed feel very satisfied when they get a gift card.

¥ Establish a plan. Even if you're shopping at the last minute, that doesn't mean you should head out unprepared. Consider the recipient, which kind of gift might fit them best,

and how much you're willing to spend. Then you can narrow down which store to visit.

¥ Download a shopping comparison app. Capital One Shopping enables consumers to comparison shop and accumulate shopping rewards. Online shopping is convenient, and can be a viable option for those who waited until mid- to late-December to shop. Just be aware of shipping times and expedited fees to make sure the gifts arrive on time.

¥ Consider a membership gift. A membership for a subscription box, a wine or coffee club or even a streaming music or movie service can be great last-minute gifts.

¥ Skip the clothing department. Clothes are go-to

choices for holiday gifts, but they can be particularly challenging to purchase. Size, cut, style, and additional variables are unique to each individual. Since browsing clothing racks can take a lot of time you likely will not have, avoid clothes as last-minute gift options.

¥ Screen shot promo codes and coupon scan bars. If you've come across discount codes and coupons in your research, have them at the ready when shopping online or in person. Don't hold up the line trying to load a website or find a coupon on the store app, as it's likely those behind you are last-minute shopping as well.

Last-minute shopping for holiday gifts requires strategy and savvy.

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A festive guide to caroling

By Metro

Christmas caroling is a joyful tradition that has endured for centuries. Christmas caroling can be traced to the fourth century in Rome. Latin hymns were written to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Historians believe that even before the emergence of Christianity midwinter songs existed to lift people's spirits through the bleak weather and extended hours of darkness.

Christmas caroling continues to unite communities and spread holiday cheer through song. It is time to inspire a resurgence of caroling by planning to gather friends, family, or neighbors for a caroling session. This guide can help anyone plan a memorable caroling event.

Gather your group

Begin by assembling a group of singers. No one needs to be an expert singer, as enthusiasm goes a long way. Reach out to friends, family, coworkers, and/or local community members. Try to get a diverse group of people together whose main goal is to have fun.

Find the right time and date

Typically evening hours after work or during weekends

are when you can reach the greatest number of people. The goal is to enable participants to relax and enjoy the experience.

Map out a caroling route

Carefully identify neighborhoods or locations that are known for being festive. While the organizer may choose to carol around his or her own neighborhood, it may be possible to engage more of the community in other settings. Look at local nursing homes or even community centers as caroling locations. Contact businesses along Main Street to see if caroling in the center of town to coincide with holiday shopping may be a good idea.

Compile a list of classics

Most people will want to hear the carols and other songs they know and love. Make a list of classic Christmas songs that aren't overly complicated and singers will already know how to sing, such as 'Jingle Bells,' 'Deck the Halls,' 'Frosty the Snowman,' and 'Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.' If a particularly accomplished singer is in the group, he or she might do a featured solo. Be sure to

See CAROLING T8



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7 ideas for a festive holiday

By Metro

The holiday season has arrived and with it comes many opportunities to socialize. With so many events on people's calendars, holiday party hosts may wonder what they can do to set their gatherings apart from others to make them memorable. Read on for seven festive ideas that can set a holiday season party apart from the rest.

1. Cook ahead. Being able to mingle with guests and guide conversation or activities is the key to being an excellent holiday host. By cooking foods that can feed crowds ahead of time, you won't be stuck in the kitchen when you should be out and about. Casseroles, stews, soups, and quiches can be cooked in advance and then warmed (or set in a slow cooker) to bring to temperature.

2. Choose a color scheme. Choose a color scheme that really pops and sets a festive tone. For a holiday cocktail party, consider bold reds and pinks and add a burst of gold for that contrast of color that adds impact.

3. Hire some entertainment. Conversation and reminiscing can fill some time, but allot some of the party budget to entertainment. Perhaps hire a DJ who can keep the music flowing, or a karaoke professional who will have guests up and singing holiday (or non-holiday) tunes?

4. Create a signature cocktail. An open bar can be expensive,

especially if you want to stock it with top-shelf offerings. Wine and beer is more affordable, and hosts who want to offer something a little different can create a signature cocktail for the party. Tie in seasonal flavors, whether you go sweet with a chocolate cream liqueur and mint or something more tart like a cranberry-based drink.

5. Rearrange the furniture. If the music is playing and guests are fired up, you'll need a spot where they can dance. Move large furnishings out of the main gathering space to create room to cut a rug; otherwise, create an outdoor gathering area complete with stringed lights so guests can take the fun outside, if necessary.

6. Plan for prizes. Guests always appreciate some sort of takeaway. Gifting is commonplace this time of year, but perhaps have guests work a little to reap the rewards? Simple trivia games or a scavenger hunt can increase the fun and make it possible for guests to walk away with some swag.

7. Have at least one unexpected item. This can be anything from a very clever and cute dessert to a special guest to an over-the-top decorative item that gets people talking and ensures the party is one no one will forget.

Throwing a festive holiday party is easier than one may think. With some creativity, hosts can plan a party to remember.



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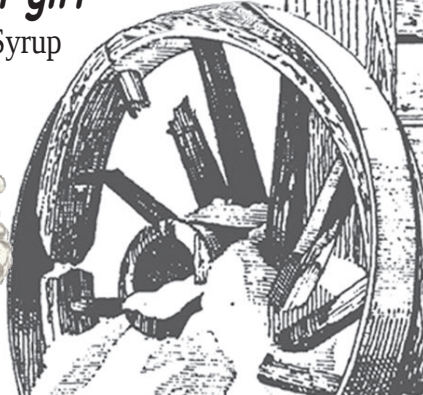


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What to get the sports fanatic on your holiday shopping list

By Metro

Diehard sports fans are a passionate lot. That passion is something to keep in mind come the holiday season, when shoppers typically must find the right fit for everyone on their list. Such an undertaking is no small task, as veteran shoppers know that the right gift for one person on their list rarely aligns with the perfect fit for another loved one. But when it comes to finding gifts for sports fans, the options are endless.

¥ Gear: Some sports fans are spectators, while others can't wait to compete. Some new gear can be just what fans in the latter group are hoping to find under the tree this holiday season. Avid golfers may love a new driver or golf bag, while loved ones who can't wait for softball season to start each spring may consider a new bat the best gift they receive this holiday season. Whatever sport sparks your favorite athlete's passion, there's sure to be some gear that can help them take their game to the next level.

¥ Tickets: Perhaps nothing sparks sports fans' passion more strongly than seeing their favorite team in person, and that's even more true in a post-pandemic sports landscape. Popular sports like football, baseball and basketball have traditionally sold lots of tickets, but even sports like college volleyball and Major League Soccer have set attendance records since fans were allowed to return to stadiums after the removal of pandemic-related restrictions. The demand for tickets to live sporting events has spiked as a result, and Team Marketing Report noted National Football League tickets increased by nearly 9 percent in 2023 and Major League Baseball tickets increased by 3.5 percent in that same year. Such increases have priced some fans out of the market, which is why tickets can make for such a great gift this holiday season. The



gift of attending a game in person is something a loved one won't soon forget.

¥ Apparel: Proud sports fans want to show their true colors, and nothing makes it easier to do so than team apparel. According to Statista, the global sports apparel market generated roughly \$213 billion USD in revenue in 2023. A jersey with the name and number of a loved one's favorite player can make for the ultimate apparel gift, but don't overlook T-shirts, hats, outerwear, or other options this holiday season.

¥ Television: The popularity of watching sports is undeniable and the proof is in the financial pudding. For example, Statista reports the annual value of the NFL's deal with ABC/ESPN/Disney to broadcast Monday Night Football was approximately \$2.7 billion in 2023. That figure underscores how much fans love watching their favorite teams, and they need somewhere to do so. There may be no quicker route to a sports fan's heart than through a new television to make the viewing experience that much better. The prices on 4K UHD televisions have dropped considerably in recent years, so a new

TV can make the perfect gift for the sports fan in your life. Split the cost with fellow loved ones and then enjoy watching your favorite sports fan react upon seeing his or her new television under the tree.

These are just a few of the many gifts to consider for the diehard sports fan on your shopping list this holiday season.

Caroling

From T6

have printed copies of the lyrics and sheet music for all participants.

Enlist some musicians

Although caroling is traditionally done a capella, having someone who plays an instrument, like a guitar or violin, can ensure everyone is on the right note and can keep the pace of each song.

Plan to rest

Singing can be joyful, but also tiring. Bring along refreshments so the carolers can rest their voices and stop to grab a drink or snack. Tea, coffee and cocoa can warm up participants on chilly days. Perhaps

make one of the caroling stops in front of a local coffee shop and pop in after a set.

Coordinate attire

Although everyone does not have to dress alike, a similar element, such as a red scarf or green mittens, can unite the group.

Add a charitable element

Consider incorporating a charitable aspect to the caroling. Collect financial or food donations for a local food pantry, or do a toy drive while caroling, encouraging people to offer a wrapped gift in exchange for some beautiful music.

Christmas music often sets the holiday scene, and carolers can bring familiar songs into neighborhoods this time of year.



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Great gifts for film fans

By Metro

Individuals' hobbies can provide inspiration for gifts, particularly during the holiday season when shoppers have a lot of names on their lists.

Shoppers are bound to have a movie buff in their midst. These gift ideas can be fitting whether the recipient is a budding director, cinematographer, actor, or simply enjoys the magic of the movies.

■ **Personalized movie marquis poster:** Who doesn't want to see their name in lights? While it may not be possible to have the local theater change their marquis, shoppers can simulate it with a customizable poster that puts their loved one's name front and center as part of the cast of a favorite film.

■ **Gourmet popcorn collection:** Film fans know that having the right food while



watching a movie makes the experience that much better. Elevate the viewing experience with an array of specially curated gourmet popcorn flavors. Don't forget to include reusable popcorn tubs or cups

so the snacks can keep coming.

■ **Couch (or chair) organizational system:** These products help keep everything necessary for a movie-watching experience within reach. There

are spots for remote controls, cupholders, places to stash a box of candy, and other dividers.

■ **Retro movie tape photo:** Search Etsy for sellers like TheOrigamiFox, who create personalized prints. Like the movie marquis, this print can include a stack of now defunct VHS tapes featuring the recipient's favorite movie titles.

■ **Subscription to a streaming service:** Movies have gone beyond the big screen. Some studios release their films for home viewing shortly after they've left theaters. An array of streaming service subscriptions means viewers never miss out on seeing their favorite films. Shoppers can pay for a one-year subscription to a streaming service or upgrade an existing subscription to a no-ads model.

■ **Ticket stub scrapbook:**

Give movie buffs a place to store their much-loved movie stubs and additional memorabilia all in one place with the gift of a scrapbook.

■ **Portable projector:** An easy-to-use and portable projector can plug into phones, laptops, tablets, or even traditional cable boxes to offer a big screen boost to at-home movie viewing.

■ **Behind-the-scenes information:** Many books delve into topics that are bound to pique the interest of film fans. These may include autobiographies from actors and directors, a look at how certain movies were made, trivia books, or photography books that provide a behind-the-scenes look at what goes on when the camera isn't rolling.

Movie fans will be applauding these gifts that indulge their love of film.

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Why shop local for the holidays

By Metro

Various components come together to make the holiday season a festive time of year. There is a lot to get done in a short amount of time during the holiday season, and part of that includes shopping for all of the family members and friends on your shopping list. Shopping can be a complicated process that involves identifying which stores will be the best places to shop. Local retailers make the perfect place to shop for holiday items.

According to the American Express Business Economic Impact Study, more than two-thirds of every dollar spent with a local business stays in the community. Indeed, shopping local benefits consumer and community alike. The following are some of the many perks to shopping locally throughout the holiday season.

■ Personalized atten-

tion: Small businesses are known for their personalized customer service and owners and staff are often lauded for taking the time to interact and learn about their customers, a dynamic that is impossible at larger retailers.

■ Meet and interact with people: Shopping in-person at local stores, you'll see faces from your community and become better known in the local area.

■ Shorter lines: Local stores are bound to have smaller crowds and thus shorter lines. That translates to less stress and hassle when it comes to getting in and out with holiday gifts.

■ Smaller carbon footprint: Pollution, traffic congestion, habitat loss, and resource depletion may not occur on the same levels when shopping locally compared to patronizing big box stores.

See LOCAL T11

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Great gifts for globetrotters

Metro

John Denver sang about ‘leavin’ on a jet plane,’ inspiring many to take a flight to parts known and unknown. Millions of people travel to and from the country every year, with TravelPerk estimating the market size of the United States tourism sector at \$798.81 billion in July 2023. Tourism took a hit during the global pandemic, but traveling has since rebounded in a big way.

With so many people taking to the roads, rails and skies, shoppers can customize their gift lists when shopping for people who have caught the travel bug. Below are several gifts for those with wanderlust.

■ **Portable Bluetooth speaker:** Music can make the journey more interesting and create a welcoming ambiance upon arrival. People who don’t want to leave home without their favorite tunes often have curated playlists on popular music streaming services. While earbuds are a go-to for personal listening, a portable speaker can provide impressive sound to share songs with friends when relaxing by the pool or traversing trails.

■ **Ergonomic neck pillow:** Getting some rest and being comfortable



Metro

while traveling is key. Ergonomic neck pillows keep the neck and head in a comfortable position when sitting upright during long flights or rides.

■ **High-quality passport cover:** Consider a passport travel cover that is personalized with a graphic, name or monogram. A cover can protect the passport and keep other travel documents orderly while adding a layer of elegance to travel.

■ **Compression packing**

bags or cubes: Travelers want to ensure they can bring all their gear when getting away, but sometimes suitcase space can come at a premium. Compression products work like a vacuum sealer, removing air to reduce the space that items take up.

■ **Travel adapter:** International travel requires contending with different power outlets. In order to use electronic equipment brought from home, travelers will require the right adapter. Look for ones

with multiple ports.

■ **Travel pouch or money belt:** Keeping valuables out of the hands of pickpockets means being savvy about safe storage. Travel pouches and money belts are designed to be discrete, and some can be hidden in waistbands or under clothing to protect valuables.

■ **Travel journal:** Journals allow travelers to capture memories along the way, with space to jot down experiences and add photos. It can make

for a cherished keepsake in the future.

■ **New luggage:** Every traveler needs a durable piece of luggage or two when the desire to see the world strikes. A rolling, vibrantly colored carry-on ensures the luggage is easily spotted and gives travelers the option to skip baggage check and bring it right on board.

Travel enthusiasts can appreciate gifts that cater to their desire to get away from home.

Local

From T10

That’s because local retailers tend to create or source their products lo-

cally, whereas many big box stores secure their goods overseas.

■ **Easier parking:** This goes hand-in-hand with shopping locally does not typically require driving up

and down endless aisles at malls or standalone retail stores in an effort to find a parking spot. Local retailers in town may have on-street parking or closed lots that are convenient to shoppers.

■ **Small batch shopping experience:** Consumers can secure items in small businesses that are not carbon copies of those found across the country at major retail chains. When seeking a unique,

thoughtful gift, shopping locally is the way to go.

Shopping locally this holiday season provides an array of benefits to consumers, and helps to solidify a strong Main Street in communities.

A comprehensive guide to gifting fitness fans

Metro

Physical activity is an important component of a healthy lifestyle. Exercise guidelines supported by the medical community indicate most adults should get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week, or at least 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity each week.

Individuals can take several steps to be more active in their daily lives. Some become gym enthusiasts, while others congregate to yoga studios or other activities. Some still prefer to exercise at home or outdoors. When it comes time to shop for people with a fondness for fitness, gift givers can consider these ideas.

UPGRADE A MEMBERSHIP

Do some research to learn where your fitness lover spends most time working out. If it is a traditional gym, a

kick-boxing studio or a H.I.I.T establishment, speak with the staff to see if you can upgrade the member's plan to receive more perks. For example, a base gym membership may only include use of the floor machines and weights, but another may include all that as well as access to massage chairs, spa services and more.

MASSAGER OR MASSAGE PACKAGE

Working out muscles can lead to soreness each time a new milestone is reached. Help soothe those tired muscles with the gift of a neck, back and shoulder massager. Or go a step further and purchase a few sessions at a massage therapy location near the recipient's home.

INSULATED WATER BOTTLE OR TUMBLER

Staying hydrated is important when working out. An insulated water bottle ensures

that fitness fans can enjoy cold water or a sports drink throughout their exercise sessions. There's even a water bottle that self-cleans using UV light to kill bacteria in the bottle.

Treadmill or stationary bike
If you know a loved one has had eyes on improving a home gym, a treadmill or stationary bike can bring the space to the next level. There is home equipment for every budget.

NEW KICKS

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See FITNESS T16

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Thoughtful holiday gifts for grandparents

By Metro

Grandparents play important roles in millions of families. Though grandmothers and grandfathers may always be ready to give a warm hug and provide a treat to their grandchildren, their role in modern families also includes helping with child care and other responsibilities.

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2017-2021 American Community Survey indicates approximately 33 percent of grandparents living with their grandchildren under the age of 18 were responsible for kids' care. In addition, USCB data indicates one in four children under the age of five is cared for by a grandparent while parents go to work or attend school.

There's no denying modern grandparents are actively involved in their grandkids' lives, providing an invaluable benefit to parents who might struggle to afford or find reliable child care elsewhere. With that in mind, families can



Metro

make a concerted effort to find thoughtful gifts for grandparents this holiday season.

■ **Travel gifts:** Grandparents may play an integral role in the daily lives of their families, but many aging individuals still aspire to travel, especially if they're retired. In fact, a recent poll by RBC Wealth Management-U.S. found that 63 percent of individuals age 50 and older identify travel as an important retirement goal. Families can surprise grandparents this holiday season with a cruise vacation, money to book flights to parts unknown

or additional travel-related gifts, such as new luggage.

■ **Framed children's artwork:** Whether it's purchased through a child's school or via a third party seller or created at home as a family craft project, framing artwork created by children in a frame designed for grandparents is a heartwarming gift. School-aged youngsters are especially productive artists, so artwork can be updated over the course of a year as grandparents are gifted more and more memorable pieces.

■ **Home upgrades:** Up-

grades around a grandparent's home can vastly improve their quality of life, particularly if they've long since reached retirement age. Arrange for the installation of grab bars in grandparents' bathrooms and reinforced staircase bannisters around the house. Such a gift might not be as heartwarming as children's artwork in a specialty frame, but it is a practical and potentially life-saving token of your love and appreciation.

■ **Journal:** A journal is another thoughtful gift that encourages grandparents to share their life stories. Though it's up to grandparents to decide what they want to write about in their journals, a suggestion to detail their life stories lets them know their families are interested in how they

became the people they are today. Grandparents may cherish the opportunity to pass on their life stories and anecdotes to the younger generations of their family.

■ **Ancestry kit:** Interest in genealogy has increased dramatically in recent years, as advancements in technology have made it easier than ever to trace one's ancestry. If grandma and grandpa have yet to join the genealogy party, a DNA kit from a popular ancestry service can open the door to an illuminating and fascinating hobby.

Grandparents do a lot for their families, and the holiday season provides a great opportunity for families to show grandmothers and grandfathers how much they're appreciated.



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5 fun gift exchange ideas

By Metro

Gift-giving is a significant component of the holiday season. Families can embrace traditional gift-giving, but those who want to add a touch of whimsy to gatherings with loved ones can consider these five creative and fun ways to exchange gifts.

1. Play the plastic wrap game. To exchange small stocking stuffer gifts, compile gift cards, cash, small toys, candy, and even some larger gifts (all participants can chip in and one person shops for the gifts). The designated person in charge begins rolling up the gifts in the plastic, adding one every few rolls. Turning the ball 90 degrees while wrapping helps make a more round, finished gift ball. To play, the person with the ball puts on oven mitts and tries to unwrap as much as they can to access the gifts, while the person to the left is attempting to roll doubles on dice. When doubles are made, that person passes the dice to the left and starts his or her own attempts



Metro

to get at the gifts in the plastic ball. The game ends when all the gifts are revealed, whether everyone has had a chance to unwrap or not.

2. Plan a white elephant gift exchange. A white elephant exchange is like a secret grab bag. Everyone brings a wrapped gift, and then takes

turns choosing a gift based on the number they've been given. When the gift is chosen, the person opens it. The next player can select a fresh gift or steal one of the presents that's already been opened.

3. Host a make-and-take craft party. With this type of exchange, participants will en-

gage in some form of crafting for the duration of the event, whether it's pottery, painting, epoxy resin pouring, or even knit crafts. At the end of the night everyone can swap their creations with another or keep their own crafts as gifts.

4. Give the gift of a group outing. Instead of exchanging

material gifts, focus on sharing experiences with friends and family. A trip to watch a sports game or a theater performance can be an excellent way to spend time together, and something a person may not be inclined to do on his or her own. Certain venues will offer discounts on group tickets, so everyone can pool their resources.

5. Host a DIY cookie and cocoa exchange. Cookies, cocoa and the holidays are a perfect combination. A gift exchange where participants supply ingredients for these sweet treats, share their favorite recipes and then put together the finished products can make for an entertaining and festive afternoon. Each person can fill a cookie tin with baked cookies to take home and mason jars filled with homemade hot cocoa mix and marshmallows can be an additional gift to enjoy later on a chilly evening.

There are plenty of fun ways to exchange gifts during the holiday season.

Holiday shopping tips you can't afford to miss

By Metro

The festive and fun nature of the holiday season can make it easy to forget the benefits of being frugal. Many people go overboard on holiday spending, making this time of year costly for consumers.

Sales between the beginning of November 2023 and Christmas Eve 2023 climbed 3.1 percent from the year earlier, according to the Mastercard SpendingPulse. The National Retail Federation reported in November 2023 that holiday spending was expected to reach between \$957 and \$966 billion. Trading Economics, a financial market indicator and forecast provider, said personal spending in the United States only rose 0.2 percent in May 2024 from the previous month, which marked the lowest increase since January 2024.

Shoppers who want to spend less and stick to a budget for holiday entertaining and gifting can keep these budgeting tips in mind.

¥ Set a value to gift recipients. It may sound harsh, but certain people on holiday shopping lists may be assigned a higher value than others. For example, you wouldn't necessarily spend the same amount on a gift for a child's teacher as you would for a grandmother. Putting a dollar figure next to each name on the shopping list helps you identify your expected spending and where you can cut back, if necessary.

¥ Establish your overall budget. Once you have an idea of your potential holiday expenditures, set a firm budget. Avoid the temptation of impulse buys, which can make it easy to go over budget.

¥ Begin shopping early. Start scouring ads and looking for deals prior to Thanksgiving or Black Friday. Keep a running list of gift ideas and when the price is right, purchase those items.

¥ Price check 'perfect gifts.' If you've spotted the perfect gift for someone but it's beyond budget, see if you can find a better price elsewhere, says Better Money Habits. There are apps that allow users to scan barcodes and check items across various retailers. Many stores also have price-match policies that can save shoppers money.

¥ Look for deals all of the time. Many people get hung up on perceived deep discounts from Black Friday and Cyber Monday offers. However, industry experts say there often isn't a huge difference in markdowns



Metro

Common giving scams and how to spot them

Metro

December is a season of giving, and that charitable spirit is evidenced by the uptick in donations over the final month of the year. Perhaps inspired by Giving Tuesday, which is celebrated annually on the first Tuesday after Thanksgiving, donors tend to be especially generous in December. According to Donorbox, which provides an online fundraising platform to facilitate charitable donations, 31 percent of yearly charitable giving happens in December.

Nonprofit organizations undoubtedly recognize the spirit of generosity that surfaces each December, but criminals are likely cognizant of individuals' desire to give back during the holiday season as well. Indeed, a 2023 press release from the United States Attorney's Office in the Western District of North Carolina cited fake charities as one of the most common scams encountered by consumers during the holiday season. With that in mind, well-meaning prospective donors can learn to recognize common giving scams to ensure they are not victimized by criminals looking to prey on their generosity this holiday season.

■ **Fraudulent charities:** Criminals targeting people who want to donate during the holiday season may set up fraudulent charities in an effort to trick people into giving them money. The New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs notes that fraudulent charities may feature impressive names or a name similar to one used by a reputable, well-known charity.

■ **Phishing emails:** Phishing emails have been around for decades, and for good reason. Such scams are easy to implement and highly successful. The Federal Trade Commission reported receiving 358,000 reports of scammers contacting individuals via email in 2023, and the real number is likely much higher, as few consumers take the time to report such emails to the FTC. Phishing emails typically prompt recipients to click on a link embedded in an email. These emails may seem as though they're coming from an individual's bank or credit card company, while others may indicate recipients can win a prize if they open the email and click on a link within it. The New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs warns consumers against sharing

their credit card information in an email, even if the sender claims to be from a reputable charity.

■ **Pressure tactics:** Seeking to capitalize on the spirit of giving that surfaces each December, some scammers will pressure prospective donors and potential victims into making donations over the phone or via links embedded in an email. Reputable charities do not pressure donors into giving over the phone or via email, so solicitations for immediate donations are a telltale sign of a charity scam. If prompted to make donations with cash or via gift cards or wire transfers, hang up the phone, as the FTC notes such payment methods are how scammers request donations.

■ **Thank you messages:** Another common giving scam is to thank potential victims for past donations they never made. This is an attempt to trick generous individuals into thinking they have a past relationship with a charity they believe is reputable,

which might make them less inclined to vet the person or organization thanking them. Scammers are banking on es-

tablishing that false sense of security and trust, particular-

See SCAMS T17



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Gifts for music lovers

Metro

Danish author Hans Christian Andersen once said, "Where words fail, music speaks." Music is a universal language that can bridge cultures and unite people from all over the world in compelling ways. Is it any wonder that so many people are inspired, soothed and encouraged by music?

No two music fans are the same, so it's not always easy to find the right gift for the budding rock star or audiophile on a holiday shopping list. Tuning in to these individuals' love for music is a great way to grab gifts they are sure to enjoy.

Fitness

From T12

athletic shoes ensure workouts aren't hindered by sore feet. Since shoe fit and style is a personal choice, it might be a safer bet to give a gift card to a popular athletic store or online retailer rather than purchasing the footwear yourself.

Fitness monitor or smart watch

It seems like everyone now has some sort of smart device, but if the person on your list still hasn't made the switch to a watch that tracks various health data, then that can make for a perfect gift. Smart watches and fitness trackers monitor steps and various health markers such as pulse, elevation climbed and distance, and can even detect if a user has a burgeoning health problem. When pairing the watch with popular fitness apps, users can log daily activities and their diets to get a bigger picture of their overall health.

Those who prioritize fitness can benefit from any number of health- and fitness-minded gifts this season.

■ Go vinyl: Vinyl albums predate cassettes, compact discs and digital music. But there are still some artists who release

on vinyl, and many music fans say nothing beats the sound of a record playing on a turntable. Find an artist the recipient loves, and

visit a local music shop to track down a vinyl version of one of their albums.

■ Purchase an instrument: Has a budding mu-

sician had his or her eye on an instrument upgrade?

Sweep in and be the holi-

See MUSIC T17

HOMETOWN Holidays

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Music

From T16

day hero by purchasing a brand new one according to the specs desired.

■ **Photo history book:** Browse a local bookstore and you will find a range of books that are geared toward music fans. From biographies of famous artists to compilations of album cover art throughout the years to songbooks for aspiring musicians, there's no shortage of options at a local bookseller.

■ **Custom-molded earplugs:** Hearing loss is nothing to take lightly, and music fans who frequently play or attend concerts need to prioritize protecting their hearing. Custom-molded earplugs will conform to the wearer's ear shape, offering ultimate protection.

■ **Luxury headphones:** A luxury set of headphones can provide amazing audio for the best listening experiences.

■ **Audio interface:** A loved one who wants to start making their own recordings will need an audio interface. This device connects a computer to music instruments and other audio equipment allowing one to play, record and process sound.

■ **Approved fanny pack:** Stadiums are cracking down on the types of bags concert-goers can bring in. Therefore, a stadium-approved clear fanny pack can be a great gift for day hero by purchasing a brand new one according to the specs desired.

Organize a fun white elephant gift exchange

Metro

Gifts exchanged during the holiday season do not have to have deep meaning. Among friends and coworkers, a type of gift exchange called a white elephant can add some more lighthearted fun to an already festive season.

A white elephant gift exchange involves participants selecting humorous, quirky, unusual, or themed gifts to swap with others. The wrapped gifts will be placed in a central location with no information indicating what's within the wrapping, nor who brought the actual gift. The rules of exchange vary depending on who you ask, but can include drawing numbers to pick the order in which participants will select their gifts. Some play where the first person opens the gift and then subsequent participants can opt for a wrapped gift or ØstealØ from the previously opened options.

Organizing this gift exchange is relatively easy, but involves picking a person to act as an emcee of sorts. That person will need to handle the following tasks:

¥ Establish a spending limit for the white elephant gifts. Some white elephant exchanges also define which gifts are appropriate and which should be avoided.

¥ Select an exchange date



and time. This will involve having someone host at their home, a place of business for a work exchange, or even meeting at a restaurant or another establishment for a fun evening out.

¥ Invite participants to the exchange by explaining the rules and the expected amount of the contribution.

¥ Calculate the number of participants who have arrived and then print or write out number sheets

that will be placed in a bowl. Verify this total matches the number of gifts to ensure that there will be no missing ones. There is no need to worry if someone commits and then drops out afterwards, because only the number of participants actually there on the day of the exchange will be factored into how many numbers will be used for choosing gifts.

¥ Plan a few ice breakers so that participants who

may not know each other can become more comfortable before the fun begins, particularly if the white elephant exchange will include the stealing and swapping aspect for extra laughs.

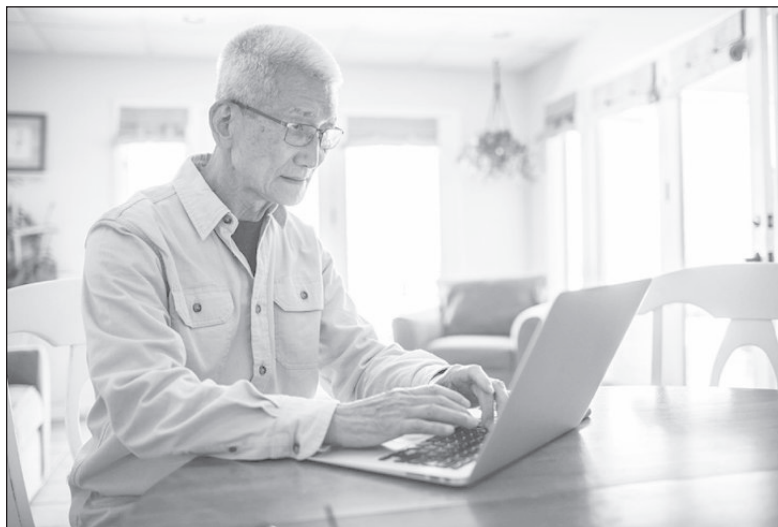
A white elephant gift exchange can be an entertaining way to let off steam during the holidays and share small gifts with friends or coworkers.

Scams

From T15

ly during a notably busy time of year when donors may feel as though they don't have the time to research organizations they want to support.

Scammers prey on individuals' generosity each holiday season. More information about giving scams and how to avoid them is available at consumer.ftc.gov.



Phishing emails are one charity scam individuals must learn to recognize, particularly during the giving season.

How to master shopping early for the holidays

Metro

'The early bird gets the worm' is a well-known English proverb that historians trace all the way back to the 1600s. Though the words might first have been popularized hundreds of years ago, they remain as true today as they were then, particularly in regard to holiday shopping.

Savvy shoppers have long touted the importance of starting early when looking for holiday gifts for loved ones. Seasoned procrastinators may never embrace early shopping, but others who want to a less hectic holiday shopping season can consider these tips.

■ Begin with a plan. Holiday shopping excursions, whether they take place in town, at the mall or online, can take longer than expected when shoppers have no idea what they're looking for. Prior to your first holiday shopping trip, jot down gift ideas for each person on your list. Then scour stores or websites for those items. Starting early affords shoppers time to bargain hunt and ensures supply shortages or other issues won't get in the way of a happy loved one come the holiday season.

■ Recognize the notion of OearlyO has changed. Early holiday shopping used to be synonymous with the retail holiday Black Friday, which occurs the day after Thanksgiving in the United States.



However, many holiday shoppers now begin buying gifts long before they've purchased a Thanksgiving turkey. In its 2022 Consumer Pulse Survey, McKinsey & Company found that 56 percent of consumers started their holiday shopping in October. A host of variables may have influenced that shift, but supply chain issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic have lingered, which undoubtedly compelled consumers to get an especially early start on holiday shopping. Shoppers who want to ensure everything arrives on time for the holiday season must recognize that OearlyO shopping now involves beginning around Halloween, if not earlier.

■ Take the (local) road less traveled. Shopping local merchants in person is a strategy savvy shoppers have long since embraced, but it's one that's especially beneficial in an era

marked by supply chain issues and inflation. Local merchants don't have the overhead or sizable staffs of big box or chain stores, which enables them to keep costs low. And since local merchants produce many of their own products, it's likely there's something in store that shoppers will love and

See EARLY T20

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Holiday spending projections

Metro

The holiday season tends to be the busiest for retail sales, and going by how shoppers opened their wallets during the 2023 season, many are wondering if 2024 will be another banner season for retailers. Last year, the average consumer spent around \$1,530 on gifts and other needs for the holidays, according to Mailmodo. The United States Department of Commerce indicated retail sales grew 4.1 percent year over year in November 2023. Industry forecasters have made a few predictions for the 2024 holiday spending season, and these are some key takeaways.

■ The presidential election likely will have a major impact on consumer shopping. Shoppers were expected to bide their time (and possibly their

spending) until they feel better about the outcome of the election. Forecasters suggested if a consumer's chosen candidate wins, they'll feel more comfortable about higher spending. If not, spending may be curbed.

■ As retailers learn more about consumers' preferences for personalized offers, shoppers may find finely tuned discounts and offers showing up in their emails or text messages.

■ Forty-three percent of consumers are carrying more debt now than in 2023 because they are reliant on their consumer credit cards more than ever. Expect to see more 'buy now, pay later' deals by retailers to lure in customers.

■ Salesforce research says consumers will continue to utilize the convenience of online shopping on

Black Friday, blurring the lines between that popular retail holiday and Cyber Monday.



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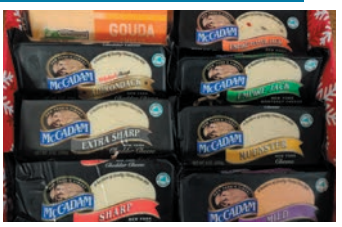
1

SAMPLER BOX

\$28.95

Custom Orders & Gift Certificates Available!

- * 8oz. McCadam Sharp
- * 8oz. McCadam Extra Sharp
- * 8oz. McCadam Adirondack
- * 8oz. McCadam Pepper Jack
- * 8oz. McCadam Empire Jack
- * 8oz. McCadam Muenster
- * 8oz. McCadam Mild
- * 8oz. Cabot Gouda





2

NORTH COUNTRY TASTE

\$26.95

- * 12oz. Maple syrup
- * 8oz. McCadam Muenster
- * 8oz. McCadam Sharp
- * 8oz. McCadam Extra Sharp
- * 8oz. McCadam Empire Jack





3

SNACK & SHARE BOX

\$29.95

- * 10oz. Pepper Jack Cracker Cut
- * 10oz. 1 Year Aged Cracker Cut
- * 10oz. Seriously Sharp Cracker Cut
- * 8oz. Beef Stick
- * 10oz. Summer Sausage



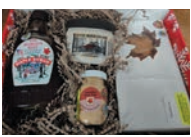


4

MAPLE TO GO BOX

\$39.95

- 12oz. Maple syrup
- * 1/2 lbs. Maple Candy
- * 16oz. Maple Crème
- * Maple Sugar





5

CHEESE & SAUSAGE

\$25.95

- * 8oz. McCadam Muenster
- * 8oz. McCadam Adirondack
- * 8oz. McCadam Pepper Jack
- * 8oz. Cabot Gouda
- * 10oz. Summer Sausage





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Pete and Sue McElwain



Shopping

From T14

between these promotions and those during other sales. Some retailers even increase prices on goods only to mark them down for Black Friday to make it appear that there is a discount. Only by knowing the average price for items can you know if a sale is legitimate.

¥ Sign up for store rewards. If you don't want your regular email inbox inundated with offers, set up a separate email account for in-store and online shopping. Then you can sign up for the rewards programs at checkout. Utilize the coupon codes and advertisements for sales to save money without having your primary email data shared with other marketers.

¥ Track spending carefully. If you don't know how much you're spending, then you cannot possibly stick to a budget. After each purchase, keep a running tally of all holiday spending to see how far you are from the finish line.

The holidays can be expensive, but with smart budgeting and dedication to savvy shopping, it's possible to stay out of financial trouble.

Parade

From T2

community. This year I looked at probably 30 trees and one of my final stops was out in Bangor," she said, "As I was talking to him (Menke) about the parade, my goal, and why I do it and that it is going to veterans and he told me he is a veteran of the Air Force and it's almost like it kind of came full circle."

Robinson said she believes this year's tree is about 30-feet tall.

A sign up sheet for this year's parade is a Google Docs available on Malone's Annual Parade of Lights Festival Facebook page.

"I've been sharing that a lot. People can go right to the parade Facebook page and click on the sign up sheet," Robinson said.

4 unique gifts for busy professionals

Metro

The holiday season is synonymous with giving. Families engage in gift-giving come the holiday season to show their loved ones how much they appreciate them. Such sentiments are thoughtful and can have a big impact when shoppers find the perfect gift.

The perfect gift can be elusive. No one wants to give a gift that won't end up being used, and some people on shoppers' lists may prove more difficult to shop for than others. That might be the case with busy professionals who are seemingly always working. This holiday season, shoppers can consider these four unique gift ideas for loved ones climbing their way up the corporate ladder.

1. Luggage

Business travel took a hit during the pandemic, and a spring 2023 report from the research firm Morning Consult predicted that it may never return to what was considered normal prior to the pandemic. However, the report indicated that the average business traveler is now younger and earning less than the average business traveler before the pandemic. That makes luggage an ideal gift for the up-and-coming professional who may be traveling more and could benefit from some stylish, sturdy and durable luggage.

2. Fountain pen

Few small items exude a greater sense of sophistication and success than a high-end, engraved fountain pen. Established professionals will appreciate the sleek and impressive appearance of a hand-crafted, custom-

ized fountain pen, which can be used to pen memos or sign important documents in style.

3. Temperature-controlled smart mug

Caffeine is the secret behind many a professional's success. A temperature-controlled smart mug can ensure your favorite corporate executive's coffee maintains its ideal temperature no matter how hectic the day becomes.

4. Yoga sessions

Stress is part of the job for many successful professionals. In fact, the American Institute of Stress reports that 94 percent of workers report having chronic stress at work. The competitive nature of the corporate world may not afford many opportunities to decompress during the workday, but the National Institutes of Health reports that yoga can play an effective role in reduc-

ing stress and anxiety. Some yoga sessions, which can be purchased from a local yoga studio or even through an app users can access on their smart TVs, can be just what successful executives need to unwind in a healthy way after a long day at the office.

Successful professionals have a lot on their plate. A gift that can make their workdays better is sure to be a hit this holiday season.



Early

From T18

less likely that they will have issues filling orders. A late fall

afternoon in a local shopping district can yield an array of treasures and help holiday shoppers find the right gift for many a person on their list.

■ When in doubt, go gift card. If the right gift is prov-

ing elusive even when shopping early, shoppers should not hesitate to go the gift card route. Shoppers need not feel as though a gift card is a non-starter, as a 2022 survey from the National Retail Federation

found that 54 percent of survey respondents indicated gift cards were the most desirable gift of the holiday season.

Shopping early is a great way to enjoy a less hectic holiday season.

Gag gifts add humor to gatherings

Metro

The bulk of gifts exchanged during the holidays will be thoughtful items chosen based on the interests of their recipients, such as game tickets for a sports fan or an autographed movie poster for a film fanatic. Incorporating a few gag gifts can elevate celebrations by getting everyone laughing and engaging in good-natured ribbing.

Funny gag gifts can be as entertaining to give as they are to receive, as long as the person on the receiving end has a good sense of humor. However, families and friends can avoid any chances for animosity by making it a point that everyone in the gift exchange receives at least one gag gift.

■ Various noisemakers: On stressful days when an office or home is quiet, the resident joker can set off the noisemaker to break the tension. Noisemakers may be figurines that make animal sounds or buttons that yell out funny phrases or even 'blue' words.

■ Funko pop figures: Funko makes figures of pop culture characters. Therefore, if a gift



recipient likes a particular television show or movie, there's a good chance you can find a figure of a character he or she likes. The company's website (Funko.com) even enables users to build a Personalized Pop! Yourself Figure in their own or a loved one's likeness.

■ A goofy celebrity print: Believe it or not, there is a compa-

ny called Celebs on Sandwiches (www.celebsonsandwiches.com) that produces prints featuring popular celebrities standing or sitting on various types of sandwiches. There is a category for holiday prints that includes characters from well-known holiday movies like Buddy the Elf.

■ Gag box: Sometimes it's

not the gift but the box the gift is in that can be the gag. Nestle a gift that the recipient really wanted into a box for a product that is slightly embarrassing or they do not need, like an ergonomic toilet seat. Once the box is opened, however, the true gift will be revealed.

■ Useless knowledge: Scour the aisles of a bookstore for vol-

umes about unusual, quirky or fun facts. There's even a series known as 'Uncle John's Bathroom Reader' books that provides hours of entertainment for people while they are occupied in the bathroom.

■ Fake lottery tickets: One of the oldest gag gifts that still fools others, fake lottery tickets make recipients think they've scored the jackpot when they're still no richer than before they scratched the ticket.

■ Animal socks: Animal lovers can get a good laugh when they slip on animal paw- or face-printed socks and shuffle around home in them.

■ Adult achievement stickers: Who says young children are the only ones who can earn gold stars or good job awards? Purchase pre-printed stickers or design them to say things like, 'Fixed it myself,' or 'Didn't lose my keys today.' After all, adulting is an achievement, too.

Gag gifts can add levity to holiday celebrations when they are offered in a good-natured way.

What shoppers can do to avoid breaking the bank

Metro

Millions of individuals enjoy holiday shopping for their loved ones each year. Come the holiday season, thoughts of what to get friends and family is foremost on the minds of those who embrace the spirit of giving that is synonymous with this special time of year.

It's easy to overspend come the holiday shopping season. That could be even easier in an era marked by high inflation, which has affected consumers since 2022. Lingering inflation could require shoppers to be especially vigilant with their shopping budgets this holiday season. Thankfully, a few simple strategies can help shoppers stay the financial course this holiday season.

■ Track spending with a banking app on your smartphone. Consumers can now track their spending in real time by downloading their bank and/or credit card app on their smartphones. A quick login can help shoppers monitor account balances to determine how much they have spent. If the budget is about to be busted, pull back the reins and cut the shopping trip short.

■ Establish gift value limits. No one has been immune to the effects of inflation over the last year-plus. So family members likely won't have a problem establishing spending limits this year. Work together

See SHOPPERS T23



Build your gift list for DIY enthusiasts

By Metro

Rising prices have pushed people to look for new ways to save money. The do-it-yourself approach to home repairs has long been seen as a potential avenue to save money, and holiday shoppers can consider DIY when shopping for loved ones this year.

A recent survey by the remodeling company Allstar Home reported that 70 percent of Americans have recently engaged in DIY home improvement projects. Similarly, a new Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of the DIY Network found that 73 percent of Canadian homeowners have done a renovation project themselves in the past. With so many homeowners tackling projects around the home on their own, DIY-related products may be just what's needed to hammer down the perfect gift. The following are some potential home improvement presents for DIY enthusiasts.

¥ Magnetic wristband: Keeping items close at hand takes on new meaning when one utilizes a magnetic wristband. The BinyaTools Magnetic Wristband is just one of the versions of this handy tool that's ideal for wrangling



Metro

screws, nails, washers, and any other ferrous items. It's also a great option for crafters and jewelry makers.

¥ Painting essentials kit: Painting is an easy and effective way to transform a room. For those DIYers who have yet to compile all of their painting gear, local home improvement retailers often package kits that include a dropcloth, assorted roller sizes, brushes, a paint tray, and even painter's tape to get started on projects.

¥ Rolling work bench: People serious about projects will need a place to store all the tools they have collected. A rolling work bench, such as

the Gladiator nine-drawer work bench, has drawers to store tools and a wooden top on which smaller tasks can be tackled. Roll it where needed.

¥ Hearing protection: Drills, sanders and other power tools can be noisy. DIYers will want to protect their hearing, and a set of workshop earmuffs can be a thoughtful gift. Some, like the 3M WorkTunes headphones, even come with Bluetooth technology to offer both

hearing protection and the ability to listen to tunes while working.

¥ Headlamp: DIYers need both hands to tackle jobs effectively, which can make holding a flashlight to illuminate the area challenging. Hands-free lighting is possible with an LED headlamp. The light is easily focused where the user is looking.

¥ Laser measuring tape: A smart measuring tape utilizes a laser to increase measuring size, calculate distances and ensure that every home improvement project lines up.

¥ Sawhorse: DIYers working on large projects can benefit from an adjustable saw horse to support materials and ensure safer cuts. The Tough-Built C700 is an option to consider since it has support pegs that fold out of the legs to allow for greater ease of use.

The list of gifts for DIYers is endless. Tools and additional gear can help people nail holiday shopping this year.

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The different types of experiential gifts

Metro

Seasoned holiday shoppers know it's not always so easy to find the perfect gift. When shoppers find it especially difficult to pick the right present, it can help to consider what recipients may want. And recent surveys have found that more and more individuals are interested in experiences rather than physical gifts.

A 2022 survey from the travel booking platform GetYourGuide found that 77 percent of individuals surveyed preferred to receive experiences over more traditional physical gifts during the holiday season. Such gifts are now categorized as experiential gifts, and there's seemingly no end to the possibilities when holiday shoppers choose to give experiences to their loved ones.

Travel

Experiential gifts related to travel are wildly popular. In fact, 63 percent of respondents to the GetYourGuide survey indicated they would most enjoy surprise travel as a gift, making it the most popular category among participants. Travel-related experiential gifts include everything from airline miles to unique activities at a loved one's eventual destination, such as a parasailing adventure at an island resort.

Outdoor adventures

Outdoor adventures need not be exclusive to vacations in parts unknown. Holiday shoppers can examine local attractions that will ensure their loved one enjoys an ad-



venturous day close to home. Such experiences are popular, as 43 percent of respondents to the GetYourGuide survey indicated they would most enjoy outdoor activities like skiing, boating or hiking. An adventure with a local company that offers hot air balloon rides or a guided hiking tour through scenic local mountains are just a couple of ways to gift an outdoor expe-

rience loved ones won't soon forget.

Food

Food-based experiences were the fourth most desirable experiential gift among GetYourGuide survey participants. Such experiences can include food tours, cooking classes, a night out at a local hotspot known for its appetizing menu, or even a meal at home prepared and cooked

by a private chef. Beverage-related experiences also merit consideration, as many a food fanatic would undoubtedly love a course on wine tasting or even home brewing lessons from the brewmaster at a local brewery.

Entertainment

Exactly half of the GetYourGuide survey respondents indicated they would enjoy tickets to a concert or show.

Shoppers can scour the websites of a loved one's favorite musicians to see when they're in town. Live theater fans may appreciate a night out to enjoy dinner and a show at their local theater.

There's no end to the experiences holiday shoppers can gift to their loved ones. And such gifts have become wildly popular in recent years.

Shoppers

From T21

with relatives to determine a reasonable limit to spend on each gift. For example, a \$50 per gift limit can ensure everyone gets a quality gift without going into debt.

■ Shop on retail holidays. Black Friday was once the only

game in town regarding retail holidays. But consumers can take advantage of additional discount-heavy shopping days like Small Business Saturday and Cyber Monday to find great deals on a wide range of items. Take retail holiday savings one step further by penciling in time to comparison shop on these popular days when retailers compete for customers.

■ Look for almost-new gifts.

Mobile providers may market the latest model smartphone as upping the ante with new bells and whistles, but chances are last year's model is just as user-friendly at a fraction of the cost. The same can be said for other gadgets like wireless headphones and smart TVs. Last year's models may be heavily discounted, particularly online, but just as impressive as their more expensive successors.

■ Keep shipping costs in mind. The sticker price of certain items, particularly large ones, is likely not the whole story regarding how much the item will cost. Certain items, like trampolines for kids or a new armchair for Dad, will likely cost considerably more than the sticker price alone. Shipping on small items may be free at various online retailers, but that likely won't be the case with larger items. The

cost of shipping some heavy items might be as much as one-third the cost of the item itself. Shoppers should keep that in mind and build potential shipping costs into their holiday budgets.

It's easy to overspend come the holiday season. However, various strategies make it easy to stay within budget when shopping for gifts for family and friends.

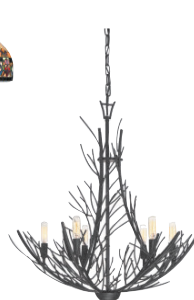
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