



Gifts that Give Back

And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Acts 20:35

story by Joli Hohenstein

"Give, and it will be given to you... for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

Luke 6:38

Feeling a bit like Charlie Brown this Christmas? While true meaning certainly looks better all dressed up, it doesn't have to be caught in trappings and ribbons, packages and bows.

In the true spirit of the season, why not look beyond the material and go for gracious giving? Find gifts that give back, both in your own warmth of giving and the recipient's joy in receiving. Your options are practically endless, and the rewards know no bounds.

The Gift of Time

You don't necessarily have to buy something to give (though any of these organizations would certainly accept physical or monetary donations). Your gift can be one of a few hours or a day of your personal time. Whether you work at a local soup kitchen or volunteer in a health care setting, your time is worth more than you can imagine.

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink."

Matthew 25:35

The Good Samaritan Inn serves nearly 300 people every day, and for 29% of their patrons, that meal is the only one they get all day. Meals are served daily from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm at 920 N. Union St. Call 429-1455 to volunteer.

For more than 35 years, the Christmas Basket Drive has warmed families' hearts and holidays. Dove and the Northeast Community Fund come together every year to reach 300 to 350 families. Clothing and toys are collected at Dove's location, 302 S. Union St., then transferred to a local church for gift basket assembly. That's where you come in—whether it's purchasing and sorting gifts and food items, assembling food baskets and gift bags, or delivering to grateful families. Call Dove at 428-6616 to volunteer your services in delivering gift bags. Call the Northeast Community Fund at 429-5846 to volunteer the delivery of food baskets.

And of course, our local hospitals, nursing homes and other organizations always have their doors wide open to volunteers. Whether you open doors, read books, lend a hand or sit and chat, know your presence is appreciated as much as, or more, than any presents would be.

Adopt a Gift

Looking for a more personal connection? Consider adopting a local family or child for the holidays. Several local organizations provide opportunities for making seasons bright.

"Feed the hungry! Help those in trouble! Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you shall be as bright as day." Isaiah 58:10

Dove and the Northeast Community Fund's Christmas Basket Drive lets you adopt an entire family, supplying a cash donation that goes toward creation of a Christmas Basket and gifts for an individual family. Of course, gloves, mittens, hats, toys, gift wrapping supplies, and foods of all kinds are always welcome too. Call Dove at 428-6616 to adopt a family.

Make a child's Christmas bright through The Salvation Army's Angel Tree program. Angels (children ages 12 and under) are qualified for the program through careful screening, then tags are placed on the Angel Tree for all to see. Stop by the Angel Trees at Hickory Point Mall in Forsyth to find your angel.

Give Joy

If you prefer giving in the truest sense, with a tangible offering to present, it's just about finding the place for your heart.

"He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." Luke 3:10

Marines don't just protect and serve—they fulfill children's dreams every year at Christmas too, and you can be part of it. Toys for Tots collects new, unwrapped toys—more than 2,000 annually—for distribution throughout the community. Drop off your wares at local area businesses bearing Toys for Tots signs.

Or how about getting more creative? The American Red Cross calls it giving hope. Give blood during the holidays—you're saving a life and giving patients and their families hope when they need it most. To find out how, call 1-800-GIVE-LIFE (1-800-448-3543) or visit givebloodgivelife.org.

For a lasting gift or tribute, plant a tree. Honor a loved one, commemorate a special event, or simply add to the local landscape, all while beautifying our world! The Decatur Parks Foundation's Living Tribute Program lets you have a maple, oak, or dogwood tree planted in a Decatur park. The Park District will plant and care for it; you receive a Living Tribute certificate and a map highlighting your tree's location. Call 422-5911 or visit the Foundation page at www.decatur-parks.org.

Please Note

These are just a few ideas for gracious giving this holiday season, intended to give you inspiration for your own giving. Here in the Decatur area hundreds more opportunities for giving await—take the time to find the one that's right for you.

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