

10 Ways to Give Back to your friends and community

for your friends (if you've got 'em!) for your community (don't be selfish!)

BY GRACE BUEKENDORF
Staff Reporter

Between late night Taco Bell runs and panicked last minute Wal-Mart trips, it is easy to exceed one's budget. Christmas lists are long and money is tight, so there must be a cheaper and easier way to knock out your Christmas list this year. Here are five gift ideas that will save you money.

1 Old t-shirts turned seasonal pillows.

You'll need a few old t-shirts, needle, thread, Sharpie and felt. One easy and fun way to revamp these shirts is to make seasonal pillows out of them. It's simple. All you do is cut two identical squares out of the same shirt or two separate shirts, depending on how big you want the pillow to be. Next, find a stencil online you want to use, like a snowman or a reindeer, and print it out. Use that stencil and the Sharpie to trace the shape onto a piece of felt. Cut out the shape and sew it onto the pillow. Next, match up the two squares, folding in the loose ends. Sew those together along the edges until you get to the fourth side. Use the scraps from that t-shirt or extra t-shirts to stuff the pillow. Now close the fourth side and you have a holiday pillow to give to your friends at little to no monetary cost.

2 Empty bottle flower vases. You'll need an empty bottle with the label ripped off, sheet music — print it off online if you don't have any — super glue, ribbon, colorful permanent markers and fabric paint. You can use glass bottles to create seasonal flower vases to give your friends and family. First, cut the sheet music so it is about the size of the original label on the bottle. Glue it onto the bottle with super glue so the sheet is positioned much like the original label was. Next, take your Sharpies and make a festive design around the border of the paper, adding some holiday cheer to the vase. To add to the design and festivity, use the fabric paint to continue the design. When the paint is dry, tie a bow around the body of the bottle with the ribbon, and voila!

3 Peanut butter and jelly candy jars. You'll need empty peanut butter or jelly containers, Sharpies, ribbon, candy and paper. With a college budget, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches are a staple in a Truman State student's diet. Chances are, you have a few peanut butter containers sitting on your dresser, or can have a few empty ones by the time Christmas comes around. First, clean out the jar. Next, draw seasonal designs on the outside of the jar with the Sharpies. Fill the jar with your favorite candy. Put the top back on and tie a bow around the neck with the ribbon. Write a small note and tape it to the top of the jar. Not only does it look crafty, but it takes about five minutes and is cheap to make.

4 The 6-pack, reindeer style. You'll need a 6-pack of glass bottles, red, black and brown pipe cleaners, googly eyes, paper and Sharpies. Sometimes the most clever gift is to spice up everyday objects with a seasonal twist, and the recipient is sure going to love your redesign of Santa's sleigh. Take your six-pack and line the outside packaging with white paper. Then, with Sharpies, make the outside of the packaging look like a sleigh. Attach black pipe cleaners to the bottom in a curved fashion to look like the runners of the sleigh. On the cap of each bottle, attach the brown pipe cleaners to look like antlers. On the neck of each bottle, attach two googly eyes and a small piece of red pipe cleaner to look like a nose. It's a crafty, clever and fun gift all your college friends are sure to enjoy.

5 Time IOUs. You'll need yourself and an hour or two of your time. It seems the world is getting busier and busier as we grow up, and time becomes more and more precious. To show you really care about someone this season, a simple, cheap and meaningful gift is to offer them some of your time. Whether it's a future plan to go ice skating during the winter, offering to make your friends dinner, or simply offering to swipe someone into a dining hall and share a meal, a time gift is sure to please.

BY NATALIE CARBERY
Staff Reporter

Regardless of where you grew up — be it a big city or a small town — odds are, you know someone in need of others' help. Unfortunately, many families this holiday season will go without luxuries many take for granted, such as feasts with the family or opening presents under a tree or by the light of a Menorah. This holiday season, Truman State students can give back to their community and make the holidays a little brighter for everyone.

1 The Food Pantry. An easy way to give back is to donate to local food pantry. Most pantries will accept any canned goods or other nonperishable food items. A few dollars can go a long way to help purchase food for those in need.

To assist hungry families in the Kirksville community, Truman students can donate to Hope's Kitchen. According to ruralmissouri.org, Hope's Kitchen provides hot meals to several families in Kirksville. The employees even make home deliveries to protect the privacy of all those involved.

2 Toy Drives. During the holiday season, it almost is impossible to walk into a public place without finding a tree covered with paper decorations listing the ages and genders of children in need. Despite how expensive the holiday season can be, buying a Christmas gift for a child often can be inexpensive and emotionally rewarding. In many communities, schools and post offices run toy drives. The Adair County Humane Society also accepts pet toys, which can be dropped off at their facility on Highway 6.

3 Homeless Shelters. Volunteering time at a homeless shelter is a free way to help the community. From helping cook food to serving it, any student can get involved without having to break out their wallets. Although there are no shelters in the Kirksville area, Welcome Home, Inc., in Columbia, Mo., and St. Patrick Center in St. Louis are homeless shelters at which students can volunteer. In many areas, churches or other religious organizations serve as a substitute for homeless shelters. For students who prefer animals to people, volunteering at a local animal shelter can be equally rewarding.

4 Goodwill. Around the holiday season, many students receive clothes and other gifts that take up valuable space. This holiday season, students should donate their new or gently-used clothes to Goodwill, the Salvation Army and other charities. When items are donated to such organizations, families in need can afford to clothe themselves.

According to the Salvation Army's website, winter is the busiest time of year for the organization. A gently used coat, snow pants or hats and gloves can make a snowy winter much more comfortable.

5 Write a Letter to a Soldier. One of the easiest ways to give back this holiday season is to write a letter to a service man or woman overseas. Just writing a letter expressing your gratitude for their service can spread the holiday spirit to all corners of the globe.

A Million Thanks, an organization devoted to sending letters to military personnel around the world, accepts letters year round. Letters can be submitted to their website, amillionthanks.org.

