

Think before you give



By Nate Smelle

NOW THAT BLACK FRIDAY is over and the Christmas shopping season is officially underway, many of us find ourselves asking the question, what should I get that special someone for Christmas?

Perhaps your special someone has a hobby or an interest which you can use in your gift search. Perhaps they are someone who is going to need a little more thought. In this case, a personalized item is usually a good way to go! There are many sites online where can find examples of gift ideas to [inspire](#) you, there are also many different options depending on the person as well!

It might seem like a simple question at first, however, upon further consideration, it becomes obvious that the impact of its answer can carry great weight. When we give someone a gift it speaks to them on many levels. The amount of care and time put into choosing a gift tells a story, as does its financial, social, and environmental costs.

How it is wrapped also paints a picture for the recipient. What type of paper is a wrapped in, what is that ribbon made of and where did it come from? More good questions leading to important answers and solutions.

It seldom matters what the gift is. It could either be a simple sweater or something chic like a personalized neon sign, which can be shopped from any online store (say, Neon Filter, for one) proclaiming your love for them. If it is given with the right intention it is always worth cherishing. I remember waking up one year on Christmas morning to a half-eaten deer head brought to me as a gift by my friend Dudley the German Shepherd. Missing its antlers and eyeballs and not really high up on my wish list that year I still recognized the great honor in his gesture. In this case, it definitely was the thought that counted.

For me, the best gifts are always the ones that communicate a shared bond between friends. Say, custom photo gifts, for example, can capture a memory, become a symbol of your bond and remind them of your special connection every time they see it. Speaking loudly without saying a word, these types of gifts tell the recipient that the giver knows them, and is listening to them.

Walking around the Arts and Crafts Guild's annual Christmas sale at the Bancroft Legion I noticed that I was surrounded by one-of-a-kind creations reminding me of loved ones. The massive room was full of hand-crafted artwork, jewellery, clothing, and other interesting locally produced gift ideas. Without a mass-produced item in sight everywhere I looked there was a potential gift with an interesting story to include along in the envelope.

Whenever I go to an event like this it always gets my creative juices flowing. Often I go home immediately afterwards and pull out the toolbox and art supplies to see what I can create. It is inspiring to see how the many different artisans and craftspeople make use of the local resources.

The unique products that sprout from this creative economy make excellent gifts because they speak more directly to a recipient's tastes and desires than any mass-produced gift ever could. Better yet are the gifts we give to others that we make for them with our own blood, sweat and time.

Not only is there a long list of events for artists and craftspeople to draw inspiration from at this time of year, there are also many workshops held throughout the community pooling together resources and creativity. Last week I sat in on a workshop with the Bancroft Horticultural Society at the Bancroft District Chamber of Commerce where members and guests were encouraged to create their own festive centerpiece from a collection of items mostly found in the forest. Next Wednesday, Dec. 7 Nicole Duncan will be hosting a do-it-yourself spa day workshop at the Bancroft Public Library to teach people how to make their own healthful and environmentally friendly skincare products. For more information on this program for adults and/or children contact the Bancroft Public Library at 613-332-3380, or contact info@bancroftpubliclibrary.ca.

Hospice North Hastings has also been bringing people together through crafting with their latest fundraising campaign that asks its supporters to make and donate wreaths to be auctioned off at the Bancroft Village Playhouse on Tuesday, Dec. 9. For more information on this event contact Barbara Shaw at bjshaw@sympatico.ca.