

Lebanon Homemakers Get Set For Holidays

BY SUZANNE KEENE

PRESCOTT — "Please don't buy me anything this year. I really don't need anything."

This common phrase is often repeated at Christmas time, especially by the older folks on our gift lists, who are often difficult to buy for. To help gift givers select practical presents that will be appreciated, Francene Gates, director of the Mental Health Association, offered gift giving advice during the Lebanon County Extension holiday program here this week.

When an elderly person requests no gifts, he may be trying to say he doesn't want to inconvenience you, Gates noted. But everyone needs positive strokes or "warm fuzzies" and gifts are one way of giving them.

When selecting gifts for the senior citizens on your list, "find a gift that satisfies you as a giver," Gates said. But, she added, "Keep in mind the person for whom you are buying the gift. Buy them what they like. If they like purple, buy purple for them."

Mary Kreider, with the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, offered a few gift suggestions. Seniors who are still ambulatory appreciate gift certificates and transportation to the mall or shop, she said.

Since many do not have the opportunity to shop every time they need a birthday or anniversary card, they may appreciate a box of assorted cards and stamps, Kreider suggests.

Large print books and magazines are always appreciated by elderly with failing eyesight, as are plants and flowers.

Senior citizens in nursing homes without in-room televisions would probably appreciate a small television set and a subscription to a television guide or to cable television.

Other gift ideas include, wall hangings, craft materials, tickets to a show and transportation.

But regardless of the material gifts you may give, the gift of your time is one of the most precious, Kreider reminded. If you give grandma craft materials, take time out to do the craft with her. If you opt for show or concert tickets, attend the event with her. She'll enjoy your company and delight in showing you off to her friends.

The physical contact of a loving hug is a precious gift as well, Kreider said. "Give as many hugs as you can. They're warmer than a sweater," she urged.

Senior volunteer Roseanna Slayton had suggestions for bed-ridden senior citizens. Many, she said, would appreciate tape players and tapes. An informal poll of her acquaintances showed that Mitch Miller tapes were the most popular.

Snapshots of your family, door decorations, perfume or special foods may also be appreciated. But if giving food, Slayton suggested



Francene Gates, director of the Mental Health Association, offers gift suggestions for senior citizens.

checking with the nurses, who will serve it in the appropriate amount at the proper time.

But the most precious gift of all, she said, is yourself. "Give the gift of yourself. It's the best gift you can give."

For those with youngsters on their gift lists, Sherry Kalbach, a free lance creative craft lecturer, had a few suggestions.

A spray-painted basket trimmed with lace and filled with baby products makes a nice gift for baby's first Christmas, Kalbach said. The name, date and birth weight can be printed on the handle with magic marker or paint.

The same idea can be adapted to a preschooler or a busy mom. Kalbach suggested filling the basket with learning games for toddlers. To make a simple matching game, fill pairs of empty film canisters with various objects like a bell, a cotton ball, and sand. Put the loaded containers in a bag and have the child shake the canisters to determine which contain the same items.

A busy mother would certainly appreciate a basket filled with ingredients for a luxury bath. You may want to include bubble bath, a good book, a box of chocolates, and a coupon redeemable for two hours of babysitting on a weekday afternoon, she suggested.

Elderly folks would enjoy a basket or decorated box filled with notepads, matching envelopes and stamps, Kalbach said.

A homemade cassette with a child's favorite story would make a nice gift for grandma to give, she noted. When making the tape, be

sure to speak slowly and with expression, ask questions about the content of the story and the pictures in the storybook, and remember to indicate when to turn the pages, she added.

A wooden egg can easily become a sachet for a man's dresser drawer or closet by rubbing it with scented oil. When purchasing oil, look for essential oils which are more potent than fragrance oils, she advised.

Kalbach also had a few simple decorating suggestions to share. To make a large lollipop for a wallhanging or doorpiece, cut two large circles of fabric and stitch them together, leaving a small open space for stuffing. Stuff lightly and insert a dowl stick (sticks from old calendars work well) for the lollipop stick.

To decorate, write a message in glue and apply glitter. Complete the project by wrapping it in cellophane and adding a bow.

To make a decorative candle holder, remove the labels from several different sizes of tin cans. Fill the cans with water and freeze. When the water is frozen solid, remove cans from the freezer and punch a design using a nail. Pour away the water and put a votive candle inside the decorated cans. They can be grouped together or used alone.

The program also included a presentation by Steven Stiles, a florist and lecturer from Hershey. Lebanon Extension home economist Letie Schadler offered holiday food suggestions.



Florist and lecturer Steven Stiles of Hershey demonstrated a few floral arrangements for holiday decorating.

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