



Earl and Sandy Geib and sons Joel and Brian prepare for Christmas year-round so that they can give generously to others and have time to spend with each other during the holiday season.

Christmas Is For Giving Says Geib Family

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MANHEIM (Lancaster Co.) —

The ping, ping of coins dropping into a jar isn't a sound that indicates a 4-year-old Joel and 9-year-old Brian Geib's piggy banks are growing. Instead, it means a needy family will receive more presents for Christmas.

"Christmas is for giving," Earl and Sandy Geib tell their sons.

Whenever any of the Geib family members receives loose change throughout the year, he or she drops it into a coin jar earmarked to buy Christmas gifts for a needy family.

"Before we were married, Earl always sponsored a family through

the Christian Appalachian Project and it's a tradition we enjoy continuing," Sandy said.

"We save all our change throughout the year, then haul it to the bank and cash it in," Earl said of the family's novel way of finding the money to spend on others.

Each year the Geibs choose a family whose children's ages are similar to Joel's and Brian's ages. That way the brothers enjoy selecting both toy and clothing gifts for the children. Earl and Sandy choose gifts for the adult family members. The gifts are packaged in a large box and mailed before Thanksgiving to the Kentucky project.

The program doesn't allow last

names to be revealed, but letters, pictures, and first names are forwarded through the agency.

"It's a neat feeling to read their letters and see how they appreciate that we care about them," Earl said.

While many families might believe that the money is needed to buy gifts for their own children, Earl saw the extreme poverty of the Appalachian area first-hand when he participated in a work project in the area, and believes it is a privilege to be able to share with others.

Giving doesn't end with the Appalachian project for the Geibs.

"We are so blessed. We try to do as much as we can for others," Sandy said.

Through their church, Chiques Church of the Brethren, the Geibs participate in providing complete Christmas dinners to needy families. This year, the goal was to provide meals to 250 families, but the church has already surpassed the 300 mark with commitment pledges. The meals will be delivered to families identified through church outreaches into Lancaster, Philadelphia, and New York.

"The excitement of giving to others is contagious. People go along to help deliver the meals and a truckful of clothing," Earl said.

"Christmas is so commercialized. We like to keep that personal touch," Earl said.

The couple are advisors for the junior youth group and teach Sunday school classes. The Geibs also use their enthusiasm for giving to encourage their students to give. Earl challenged his ninth grade Sunday School class to collect more food for the canned food



Sandy and her sons box up cookies to give to the mailman, garbage collectors, and others who provide services for the family.

drive than the previous year. Earl is excited to see how the students sacrifice for the drive. One student alone used his allowance money to buy 150 cans.

Their class also provides care packages to a needy country each year. This year, the care packages were sent to Bosnia.

Although the Geibs' lives are filled with helping others, the couple has a standing annual commitment to each other. Every year in

December, they leave their children with grandparents and spend a weekend in a local resort. After a nice dinner, they spend the whole next day shopping.

"It's a neat time for us," Earl said. "Many farmers don't have time to take a lot of time off, but this is one time that we make sure we get away. This time is just for us. The phone isn't ringing — no interruptions."

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One of the novel ways the Geibs find money to buy gifts for the needy is dropping all loose change in a jar throughout the year. The money is then used to buy gifts for a needy family through the Christian Appalachian Project. Instead of spending the loose change left over from grocery shopping, Joel and Brian deposit it in the jar to help other children.

HOMESTEAD NOTES