e ideas for those hard- to-buy-for people

By GREGG HOWARD Copley News Service

The holiday season could be cited as a study in contradictions.

Fitness fanatics who usually eat right and exercise regularly find themselves with an agenda full of late-night get-togethers where they guzzle gallons of eggnog and other highcalorie holiday delights.

By the time Dec. 31 rolls around, everybody's ready to toast the new year with pledged regimens of exercise, diet and general good health...at least until the next holiday season.

Both extremes of the holiday season - self indulgence and self-renewal - can come together in the gifts you choose this Christmas.

Unwrapping a healthy gift is just as much fun

as unwrapping a box of calorie-laden goodies, and your gift could benefit the recipient's overall health throughout the coming year.

Here are eight healthy gift ideas you should consider for the health-conscious loved ones on

Personalized training: Pulse monitors have grown up and are no longer limited to simple digital readouts. With the right options, these handy devices can give athletes the expertise to transform a workout into a highly personalized fitness program. For example, Bodyguard's new wristwatch-style monitor measures the pulse with a finger or earlobe sensor via an optoelectronic pulse detection and can be programmed with an individual's maximum and minimum pulse rate.

Other options include a buzzer that can be

a pulse recovery function that automatically measures an individual's pulse three and five minutes immediately after a prolonged workout, a clock with 12- or 24-hour display, stopwatch, lap timer and check-point alarm.

Plants: In searching for a biological air purifier for space stations, NASA scientists have discovered the common spider plant fights indoor air pollutants like formaldehyde, nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide.

If you'd rather give something more exotic, several other varieties - the Chinese Evergreen, the Peace Lily and the Golden Pothos - work well. Also, consider an aloe plant; its healing salve can do more for the skin than many commercial creams.

Pets: Whether for companionship, fun or

human need - the need to love and care for another living thing. Match the pet to your loved one's lifestyle and personality and be sure to evaluate an animal's specific needs before purchase, advises the Pet Information Bureau.

Soothing sounds: Would a certain name on your list sleep better at night if he or she were lulled by rolling surf, soft rainfall or a soothing waterfall? Look into sound synthesizers, like the Marsona 1200 Sound Conditioner that masks annoying noise with electronically synthesized

Rowing to fitness: Many Americans are rowing their way to fitness because with rowing machines they can work all major muscle groups while improving cardiovascular strength.



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