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THE GATESVILLE MESSENGER | SATURDAY, NOV. 6, 2021

A PLACE CALLED Home



How Creativity and Crafting Can Bring Families Together

The benefits of family quality time, which include positive impacts on mental health, reduced stress, promoting adaptability and more, are well understood. But the importance of creativity in families is less common knowledge.

According to a recent online study conducted by Ipsos, adults who participate in creative activities are more likely to describe themselves as optimistic, happy, passionate and joyful. But though art and creativity are vital for child development -- helping develop fine and gross motor skills, problem-solving abilities and even improving emotional wellness, according to education experts -- they're not always a focus in schools. According to the Ipsos study, seven in 10 parents feel as though standardized test scores are prioritized more than creative thinking in school.

In a world where families juggle work, school and other responsibilities, it's important to find ways to unwind and to create joyful moments that get children and adults off the couch, away from screens and developing habits of lifelong learning. The Ipsos study found that 75% of parents want their child(ren) to have more opportunities to be creative than they did when they were young, and two-thirds of adults admit-

ted they wish they got to use their creativity more in life.

The good news is families can get creative right at home by seeking out opportunities for cross-generational learning. Grandparents can pass down their hobbies and crafts. Parents can teach children the traditions that make up their heritage. Whether it's knitting, crocheting, cooking or woodworking, such hobbies are often specific to a family's culture and are precious to keep in practice.

If this is not an option, no worries. Online services can help your family get creative. For example, Craftsby, the premiere digital destination for creatives, is revolutionizing the way people tap into their potential and engage with lifestyle passions. The site can guide and encourage your family to create meaningful, creative experiences together, allowing you to set up ongoing craft projects to do with your kids, such as decorating cupcakes, sewing a cozy pillow or learning to draw something new. Even families and friends who live apart can spark creativity and learn together from the comfort of their homes. Families and friends will soon be able to share their membership with loved ones to unlock unlimited access to over 1,500 courses, many of which are now also available in Spanish. From beginner to advanced, the site offers content and

community for families and individuals of all ages in more than 20 categories. Services like Craftsby offer expert instruction, a passionate virtual community and plenty of opportunities for families to say, "We did it!" from participating in classes such as painting, gardening and cooking. To learn more or get started, visit craftsby.com.

Lifelong learning is a powerful form of personal development, helping individuals tap into their human nature of wanting to grow and explore, and when families find new hobbies and develop new skills together, they can collectively reap the benefits of creativity.



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Illuminating Ideas for Hanging String Lights in Your Backyard

StatePoint

So, you've created the backyard of your dreams and love everything about it -- except that seeing your surroundings can sometimes be a challenge once the sun's gone down. As the days grow shorter and we head into fall, it's one of the best times of year to enhance your backyard life at night.

While hiring someone to install outdoor lighting can be really expensive and in-

involved, patio string lights are a simple, cost-effective solution. Best of all, you can create a look that reflects your style using any number of patterns.

In a recent episode of "Done-In-A-Weekend Projects" called "Light Up Your Life," expert landscape designer Doug Scott demonstrated how to hang string lights, as well as discussed what to consider before, and while, doing so. Here are his steps for adding fun, personality and light to your outdoor living and dining spaces:

1. First determine how long your string lights need to be and how many strands you'll

need. The only other materials you'll need for this project are appropriate, outdoor-grade hardware (such as cup hooks or a similar fastener) and possibly an extension cord.

2. Next you'll want to sketch your design to make sure you capture what you're going for and second, to ensure you're purchasing the correct number and lengths of lights and hooks. For a more relaxed look, you may want a crisscross or free-form pattern. For a more uniform look, you can simply hang lights across the center or around the perimeter of the space.

"Regardless, just make sure your design represents you and how you want to live outside," says Scott.

3. When measuring your lights, be sure to add a few feet on each pass to allow for slack. One other thing you'll want to consider is whether you'll be able to make light connections in discreet places, ideally where they connect to the wall, post or tree.

"Having a connection in the middle of a swag won't be the end of the world, but you'll want to minimize this as

Please see LIGHTS| B3

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LIGHTS

From Page B2

much as possible,” says Scott.

4. Install your hooks according to your plan. Then, hang your lights with the bulbs removed to decrease your chances of breaking them. You’ll also want to make sure that your first strand reaches an outlet, or

you have an extension cord that will. Once you’re satisfied with your general look, install one bulb in each strand to test that everything is working properly. If all is good, install the rest of the bulbs, light them up, then kick back and enjoy.

Need some inspiration to get started? A free downloadable guide from Exmark, which provides helpful illustrations and brief descriptions of five commonly used

string light patterns, can be found by visiting Exmark’s Backyard Life at Exmark.com/backyard. There you can also access other original video series, including “Prime Cuts” and “Dream Yards,” to help you make the most of your backyard.

With a few supplies and a little creativity, brightening your backyard and enhancing your backyard life at night can be a simple DIY project.

Unique ways to cook a Thanksgiving turkey

StatePoint

Thanksgiving is a beloved holiday. Families may have their own unique Thanksgiving traditions, but one staple of this kickoff to the holiday season is bound to make its way to Thanksgiving dinner tables no matter how unusual families’ holiday celebrations may be: turkey.

Much effort goes into picking and preparing a Thanksgiving turkey. Depending on the size of the bird, turkeys can take many hours to cook. Thanksgiving celebrants are no doubt familiar with oven-roasted turkey, which is the most traditional way to cook turkey. But this year hosts who want to expand their horizons and think beyond the oven can consider two popular alternative methods to cooking a Thanksgiving turkey.

1. Deep frying

Deep frying is a popular way to prepare foods at outdoor events. For example, stroll through the parking lot on game day and you’re liable to find football fans deep frying their favorite foods at their tailgate parties. Turkey can be deep fried and this method makes for an ideal option for hosts who want to enjoy the great outdoors while welcoming friends and loved ones to their homes. Deep frying imparts a juicy flavor that can be hard to replicate when roasting a turkey. Deep frying is a much faster way to cook a turkey than cooking it in the oven. However, deep frying also can be more dangerous, so it’s imperative that cooks re-

main attentive when setting up the fryer and while the turkey is frying.

Where to deep fry the turkey also bears consideration. The turkey experts at Butterball® recommend deep frying the turkey outside on a flat surface that’s far away from structures, including your home, garage, deck, etc.

The time required to deep fry a turkey will depend on the size of the bird, but experts note that it typically takes about 3 to 3.5 minutes per pound. Electric fryers may take significantly less time and they typically require less oil, so this is another option to consider. Many experts note that it’s best to deep fry turkeys that are 15 lbs. or less, as the turkey will need to be completely submerged in oil when frying. In addition, turkeys larger than 15 lbs. may cook unevenly, which can affect flavor.

2. Smoking

Smoking has grown in popularity in recent years as grills that make this method possible have become more

affordable. Smoking is a low and slow method of cooking, so this option is ideal for people who intend to be home all day on Thanksgiving and want to infuse their birds with a smoky flavor. However, even busy hosts can still consider smoking, as electric smokers now allow cooks to remotely control the temperatures in their grills. That’s important, as smoking requires cooks to periodically check the temperature on their grills to ensure it has not dropped too low or risen too high.

Smoking a turkey typically requires maintaining a temperature between 225 and 250 F. Cooking times for smoked turkeys are typically around 30 minutes per pound, though it can take longer if the temperature is lower. Because of the extended cooking time, hosts may want to pick a turkey that weighs around 15 lbs., especially if they don’t have much experience smoking.

This Thanksgiving, hosts can try something new by deep frying or smoking their turkeys.



How to reduce risk of home fires this holiday season

Safety might not be the first thing people think of as the holiday season approaches. Faith, celebrations, decorations, and holiday dinners all come to mind when considering the holiday season. But that doesn’t mean safety should be left out of holiday planning.

Fire safety bears special consideration during the holiday season, when the prevalence of fire hazards

like Christmas trees, holiday lighting displays and other decorative items increase the risk for home fires. Such tragedies can be averted with a few simple safety measures.

- Tend to your tree. Live Christmas trees are awe-inspiring, but they also pose a significant fire risk. The National Fire Protection Association urges celebrants to purchase only healthy trees with fresh, green needles that

do not fall off when touched. Such trees are less likely to dry out, especially when well-watered throughout the season. Dry trees can catch fire more easily than healthy trees if embers from nearby fireplaces or candles drift in their direction.

- Recognize that location matters when decorating. The

Please see **FIRES** | B5

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Festive apps to satisfy guests

Thanksgiving is a food lover's paradise. Even though the turkey and side dishes are the crowning achievements on Thanksgiving, hungry guests will need something to tide them over until the pièce de résistance is ready. In such situations, bite-sized appetizers that are tasty yet not too filling can fit the bill.

Charcuterie boards and tasting menus continue to be all the rage. In addition to a platter of fruit slices, figs, aged cheeses and crostini, treat guests to "Mini Cheese Ball Bites," which offer various textures and flavors in bite-sized morsels. Enjoy this recipe, courtesy of "Spectacular Spreads: 50 Amazing Food Spreads for Any Occasion" (Rock Point) by Meagan Brown.



COURTESY PHOTO

MINI CHEESE BALL BITES make great appetizers to treat guests to in addition to a platter of fruit slices, figs, aged cheeses and crostini. They offer various textures and flavors in bite-sized morsels.

MINI CHEESE BALL BITES

Makes 12

8 ounces light cream cheese, softened

1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese

3 tablespoons drained, chopped pimentos

1 teaspoon garlic powder

1 teaspoon paprika

Pinch kosher salt

Pinch freshly ground black pepper

1/2 cup crushed pecans

1/4 cup chopped chives

12 pretzel sticks

In a large bowl, stir together the cream cheese, cheddar, pimentos, garlic powder, paprika, salt, and pepper until well combined. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30

minutes.

Place the crushed pecans and chives in a small bowl. Set aside.

Roll the cheese mixture into twelve 1-inch balls.

Evenly coat each ball with the pecan-chive mixture. Press a pretzel stick into the top of each cheese ball just before serving. Serve at room temperature or chilled.

How to handle the return of Black Friday



The holiday season figures to feel more familiar in 2021 than it did a year ago, when a global pandemic forced people to change how they celebrated and shopped. Though the pandemic is not yet in the rear-view mirror, the rollout of a trio of effective vaccines should make it possible for millions of people to celebrate safely this holiday season.

A return to normalcy should be welcome news for local retailers, and Black Friday could start the beginning of a busy and lucrative holiday season. With a more normal holiday season on the horizon, shoppers may benefit from a refresher course on how to get the best Black Friday deals.

Start early. Black Friday may not begin until the day after Thanksgiving, but savvy shoppers know that many retailers post or leak their sales well in advance of the big day. Vari-

ous websites are devoted to helping consumers find the best Black Friday deals. Many such websites update their listings as retailers release more sales information. Consumers can bookmark Black Friday websites and then periodically visit them to learn about the latest deals.

Comparison shop. Getting a head start on Black Friday shopping also affords shoppers a chance to compare prices. PriceGrabber.com makes it easy to compare deals from a wide range of retailers on everything from appliances to furniture to pet supplies.

Confirm when stores open. Many retailers abandoned midnight store openings on Black Friday a year ago. Such decisions were made to protect public health and they may remain in place in 2021. Though it might be a family tradition to visit a retailer in the wee small hours of the Black Friday morning, the pandemic

has changed the holiday shopping landscape. So confirm when stores open and close before crawling out of bed in the dark this Black Friday.

Utilize curbside pickup to avoid crowds. Shoppers who are still nervous about COVID-19 don't have to sit Black Friday out for the second year in a row. Various retailers started offering curbside pickup during the pandemic and that option has proven so popular that it's stuck around even after vaccines became widely available. Shoppers with unvaccinated children at home or those who simply want to avoid crowds can safely land great deals by opting for curbside pickup this Black Friday.

Black Friday figures to feel more normal in 2021 than it did a year ago. Consumers can capitalize on Black Friday sales by revisiting some old shopping strategies and embracing new ones as the 2021 holiday season begins.



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FIRES

From B3

NFPA notes that Christmas trees should always be placed at least three feet away from any heat source, including fireplaces, space heaters, heat vents, candles, and even overhead lights. If decorating with candles, never place them on the tree or on tables where other flammable decorations have already been placed. Chanukah menorahs should never be placed near curtains or other decorations.

- Turn off all lights and extinguish all lit decorative items when leaving the home or going to bed. Lit candles and menorahs should never be left unattended. The NFPA recommends turning tree lights and exterior decorative lights off when leaving the home or going to bed.

- Utilize a fire screen on fireplaces. Embers can catch on trees, decorations or anything else that's flammable if they escape the fireplace. Fire screens prevent that from



happening by ensuring embers from burning logs stay in the fireplace. Like candles and menorahs, fires burning in a fireplace should never be left unattended. Make sure all embers have been extinguished before leaving the home or going to bed.

- Keep discarded trees away from your home. A 2014 analysis from the NFPA found that none of the ten days with the largest share of Christmas tree fires were before Christmas. Dried out

trees still pose a fire risk even after they've been removed from a home. When discarding a tree at the end of the holiday season, place it at the curb or keep it a safe distance away from your home and garage until you can.

Fire safety measures are an important component of the holiday season that can prevent this joyous time of year from turning tragic.

5 Ways Foreign Aid Benefits America's Heartland

StatePoint

While it may sound counterintuitive, foreign aid actually benefits average Americans in a number of ways, according to leaders in the Midwest, who say the global pandemic has only highlighted how interconnected we are.

"What happens beyond our country's borders di-

rectly impacts us back home -- not just our health, but our security and prosperity as well," says Dan Glickman, U.S. Global Leadership Coalition (USGLC) senior advisor and former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. "Through U.S. diplomacy and foreign aid programs, Americans are not just providing life-saving vaccines and literally helping feed the world, they're also supporting American businesses and creating jobs here at home."

USGLC, a bipartisan coalition of business, nongovernmental organizations, faith-based groups and veterans, recently hosted the Heartland Summit to highlight how foreign aid and America's engagement in the world is critical to America's Midwest and to American families. Here are some of the Summit's big takeaways:

1. Foreign aid represents only 1% of the entire U.S. federal budget, and every \$1 spent in foreign assistance saves \$16 in response costs down the line. Making small, but smart investments today that match the global challenges affecting American's health, economic, and safety interests, can save money down the road and help ensure a global crisis never spirals out of control again.

2. With one in five jobs in

Please see AID | B7

Tips to simplify Thanksgiving entertaining

Preparing Thanksgiving dinner for a houseful of close friends and relatives can be a tad overwhelming. Thanksgiving is a food- and tradition-centric holiday, and all eyes will be typically on the dinner table. Pulling off a feast of this magnitude N multiple courses, side dishes and desserts takes considerable effort. These tips, tricks and timesavers can be a Thanksgiving host's saving grace.

Pick the menu early

Don't leave menu planning and shopping to the last minute. Decide what you'll be cooking in addition to turkey several weeks before the big day. Select two or three side dishes, preferably items that can be prepared in advance and then reheated on Thanksgiving. These can include a baked macaroni-and-cheese casserole, mashed potatoes, roasted vegetables, and a cornbread stuffing.

Brine your bird

Turkey is the centerpiece of the feast, so give it every opportunity to shine. No one

wants a dry turkey, but unfortunately this lean poultry can dry out easily. Meats typically lose about 30 percent of their weight during cooking. However, by soaking the turkey in a brine prior to cooking it, you can reduce this moisture loss to as little as 15 percent, according to Dr. Estes Reynolds, a brining expert at the University of Georgia. Brining the fowl for a day or more can infuse flavor and moisture. Food Network personality Alton Brown has a fan-favorite roast turkey recipe with an aromatic brine that has garnered five stars and was featured on his show Good Eats (www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/alton-brown/good-eats-roast-turkey-recipe-1950271). A simple salted water soak also can work.

Start prep work a few days before Thanksgiving

Take some stress out of Thanksgiving by cutting all vegetables and/or preparing some dishes a few days early. Label and organize prepared ingredients by recipe and store in the refrigerator. Make

extra room in the fridge by removing nonessential items and placing them in a cooler with ice and cleaning out any old food or condiments. Plan your table settings and label which bowls and other serving dishes will be used for which items. This will make it much easier to set the table on Thanksgiving.

Serve batched cocktails

It can be challenging and expensive to have a full bar for guests. Mulled wine, hot cider and punches are ideal ways to service a crowd looking for delicious spirited drinks.

Create simple centerpieces

Use seasonal sights for your centerpieces or place settings. These can include small squashes, gourds, citrus fruits, nuts, or acorns. A hollowed-out pumpkin filled with fresh flowers also can be eye-catching.

Thanksgiving is a time to celebrate bounty. Treat guests to a great experience by learning some hosting tips to make the holiday easier to manage.



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Follow these Thanksgiving travel safety tips

The week of Thanksgiving is a busy time of the year to travel that's marked by a large number of people traveling to see loved ones. In 2017, AAA projected 50.9 million Americans would journey 50 miles or more from home on Thanksgiving. While many people look forward to seeing their loved ones, the sheer volume of cars on the road during Thanksgiving week makes it a dangerous time to travel.

A study examining the previous five years of data on traffic crashes in Alberta, Canada, found that long weekends have 18 percent more deadly accidents than non-holiday weekends. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Thanksgiving is the most dangerous holiday for driving. The most recent

data available from NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System indicates that there were 764 crashes involving a fatality during Thanksgiving 2012. In comparison, there were 654 crashes involving a fatality during Christmas that year.

This Thanksgiving, drivers should make it a point to follow these tips to ensure they get to their destinations safely and soundly.

- **Check the forecast before you go.** Weather can be unpredictable around Thanksgiving. Conditions may be sunny one day and then cold and icy the next. Stay up-to-date on the latest weather forecasts and road conditions as you prepare for your trip, making sensible decisions about traveling if there is inclement weather.
- **Get your vehicle in-**

spected. Have your vehicle inspected in the days before you hit the road. A mechanic's diagnostic checkup and routine servicing, such as topping off fluids and changing windshield wipers, can make driving safer.

- **Keep your fuel tank more than half-full.** FEMA suggests keeping the tank full when temperatures are extremely cold. This is because condensation can build up in near-empty gas tanks, potentially freezing fuel lines and leaving you stranded.

- **Opt for airline updates.** Flights can be delayed or canceled when weather is poor. Many airlines will now text travelers who are subscribed to updates or frequent-flyer programs and apps. That's a

Please see TRAVEL | B7



COURTESY PHOTO

THIS THANKSGIVING, drivers should make it a point to follow these tips to ensure they get to their destinations safely and soundly.

A guide to picking the perfect fresh Christmas tree

Come the holiday season, perhaps no tradition evokes the warm and fuzzy "feels" more than a family outing to pick a Christmas tree. Whether it's a trek to a live Christmas tree farm or a short drive to the nearest pre-cut tree lot, the process of selecting a tree that will serve as the crown jewel of the entire season is a great way to make lasting memories.

Selecting a tree is a yearly ritual and each person has his or her set of criteria for what makes the ideal Christmas tree. These tips can help families find the right tree.

Choose your species

Do some homework on the type of tree you want prior to buying the tree. Balsam

fir and Fraser fir are popular Christmas tree varieties, but there are many others, such as noble fir and Norway spruce. Balsams are known for having the most fragrant smell, but Frasers tend to keep their needles the longest. For those who prefer a Douglas fir, keep in mind that they sometimes drop their needles prematurely due to foliar diseases like needle-cast fungus.

Space for ornaments

In addition to aroma and needle longevity, look for trees that have a desirable shape and allow for adequate space between branches, advises the home and garden resource The Spruce. Trees groomed to be lush and full will look beautiful un-

adorned, but once ornaments are added, full branches may cause those ornaments to hang low or even fall off. Trees with sparse branches allow for ornaments to hang straight.

Measure your space

Trees in the field or in a lot may look much smaller than they do when brought into the living room. Don't make the mistake of selecting a tree that is too large for your home. The agricultural firm Ragan & Masey says to measure the room from floor to ceiling and subtract the height of the tree stand and tree topper. It's equally important to measure the width of the area where the tree will

Please see TREE | B7

Can you guess the most popular gift 25 years ago

It's easy for adults to experience a little nostalgia when holiday shopping for their children. The holiday season has long been considered a special time of year, and much of that magic can be traced to the joy kids feel when unwrapping gifts from mom, dad and, of course, Santa Claus. Many parents who now have youngsters at home grew up in the 1990s. When such moms and dads are shopping for holiday gifts this season, they might wonder what was the must-have item for them back when they anxiously awaited the arrival of Christmas morning? According to Insider.com, who worked in conjunction with the Strong National Museum of Play in Rochester, New York, 1996 was the year of "Tickle Me Elmo." This ticklish toy was the most sought-after item of the 1996 holiday season, and it was so popular that retailers experienced shortages. Those shortages led to some surprising sales on the secondary market, with figures that will undoubtedly drop some jaws even now, a quarter century after the Tickle Me Elmo craze erupted. Though the Tickle Me Elmo doll retailed for around \$30 in 1996, some parents intent on getting their youngsters the most in-demand gift that year reportedly spent more than \$1,000 on a single doll. To put that latter figure into perspective, data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis indicates that the average price of a new car in 1996 was \$18,525. And according to Yahoo! Finance, drivers in the market for a used car in 1996 could have purchased a 1986 four-door Oldsmobile for just over \$2,600.

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AID

FROM PAGE 5

the Heartland depending on exports, the strength of local economies in the Midwest directly relies on stable export markets. That's where foreign aid comes into play; 11 of the United States' top 15 export markets are former recipients of U.S. foreign assistance. As a result of investments abroad, American agriculture and manufacturing can reach new customers and compete on the global stage. This supports farmers, creates jobs and helps local economies prosper.

3. With COVID variants surging and hunger, extreme poverty and instability on the rise, the global stakes couldn't be higher for America's health and economic recovery. The more than 1 billion COVID vaccine doses the United States is providing to other countries not only support thousands of local jobs, but also help ensure that variants around the world don't spread, ultimately protecting American health and safety.

4. America's top military leaders are often the first to advocate for investments in diplomacy and development programs, as they promote stability and help stop

threats before they reach U.S. shores, reducing the need to put U.S. troops in harm's way.

5. Foreign aid brings Americans together. Representing a rare space of bipartisanship, making an impact on communities in need demonstrates the compassion of the American people.

"The United States simply can't ignore what happens outside our borders," says Glickman. "Confronting global challenges can help ensure the health, safety, security and prosperity of American families."



COURTESY PHOTO

PICKING A PERFECT CHRISTMAS TREE: Selecting a tree is a yearly ritual and each person has his or her set of criteria for what makes the ideal Christmas tree. These tips can help families find the right tree.

TREE

FROM PAGE 6

stand and allow for ample space for foot traffic around the tree.

Perform a needle check
Every tree will drop some needles, and most evergreens hold their foliage. Modest needle loss is not an indica-

tor of a poor tree. However, Decker's Nursery in Greenlawn, NY says if 50 percent of the needles are lost when you swipe your hand down three to five different branches around the tree, the tree likely is not a good choice. In addition, avoid a tree that has glaring defects in the trunk as it can impede water flow through the tree.

Heavier is better

A heavy pre-cut tree means it is full of water and has been cut more recently. A healthy, fresh tree is going to require an effort to lift. Older, dried out trees will not be heavy.

Upon arriving home, make a fresh cut off the tree trunk and get it in water as soon as possible - even if that's a bucket until the tree stand can be set up.

TRAVEL

FROM PAGE 6

convenient and free bonus.

Plan for stops. Drowsy driving and distracted driving are extreme dangers across North America. Take breaks to avoid drowsiness, and only use a mobile device when safely pulled over at a rest stop.

Leave plenty of time. There are bound to be many travelers come Thanksgiving week. Build extra time into your trip so you don't have to speed or rush to make it on time.

Thanksgiving is a big travel holiday. Make it to family dinner safe and full of smiles by following various safety trips during your travels.

Eco-friendly gift options for this holiday season

The saying "the more the merrier" certainly applies during the holiday season. But during a season of big gifts, extra food and travel, "more" can exact a heavy toll on the environment.

According to Stanford University, Americans generate 25 percent more trash between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve than during the rest of the year. While no one wants to take anything away from the spirit of holiday season, everyone can take steps to make the holidays more eco-friendly. In fact, there are various eco-friendly gifts that can make great presents and benefit the environment at

the same time.

Purchase experiential gifts
When making holiday shopping lists, think of gifts that offer experiences rather than material goods. Gifts that involve experiences, such as going to a sporting event or attending a play or musical, decrease reliance on wrapping paper. Such gifts also reduce clutter in the recipient's house and conserve the resources otherwise used to manufacture alternative items that would have been purchased. Experiential gifts that also tap into environmental pursuits, such as touring with an animal rescue

group, or accommodations at a carbon-neutral hotel can be an added bonus.

Opt for locally made gifts
Select gifts made by local artisans or companies that operate domestically. This cuts down on the carbon emissions from having to ship products from long distances or even overseas.

Give climate-friendly stocking stuffers
Companies like Cool Effect offer gifts for those looking to offset carbon emissions through clever funding. People can buy and offer gifts that corre-

late to packages like Costa Rican wind power or the "poo package," which funds biogas digesters for family farms in India that capture methane emissions from cattle dung.

Get crafty
Gifts from the kitchen or ones made by the giver can be crafted from sustainable materials. They also show how you care by taking the time to customize a gift for the recipient.

Avoid gag or useless gifts
Select gifts only with utility in mind. Skip purchases that are made only to beef-up the look of presents under the

tree or to make it appear that gifting was more generous. Items that a person cannot or will not use will ultimately be relegated to the trash, which is wasteful.

Wrap in reusable materials
Fancy wrapping paper certainly looks nice, but choose other materials that can be reused. Look for decorative tins, boxes, fancy gift bags, and other items that can be reused for years to come.

Sustainability is possible during a season of excess when gift givers shop and wrap gifts with the environment in mind.

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