

CONNECT AT HOME

Families: give back this holiday season

By Kathleen Olson, University of MN Extension Service

The holiday season is here and our thoughts turn to party plans, family get-togethers, shopping and wrapping gifts. But what about those people who are less fortunate? Are

there ways you can help them? Giving back doesn't require maxing out your credit card.

The phrase, "it's better to give than receive," isn't just something you heard from your parents growing up. Even when you are short on cash and uncertain about the future economy, doing

something to help those who are less fortunate than you can warm the heart.

Pick a cause that your family believes in. Having a conversation as a family about what organizations are important to you can be a valuable lesson.

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ENCOURAGE COMMUNICATION...WITH COUPONS

Starting a conversation with a young person isn't always easy.

One way to overcome these communication hurdles is by using "coupons." Coupons are "conversation starters"—tools to let your child know you are thinking about her or him, to help you begin a dialog with them, and to build trust and communication skills.

Coupons can be tucked in your child's book or backpack, or given to your child directly, to invite him/her to do a special activity together or to just sit down and talk.

Finding a coupon may not only brighten your child's day, but can reassure her/him that you are willing to talk and support them.

Coupons can be used in a variety of ways including celebrating a special event or achievement or to encourage conversation if you suspect your child is going through a rough time.

Perhaps most important, coupons also can remind you that, no matter how busy your life gets, you should always make time to listen and take time to talk to your child.

Adapted from <http://family.samhsa.gov>.



I love you very much. I am so proud of you. This is one coupon for us to do some "girl stuff" together- you can use it whenever you want. -Love, Mom

Give the gift of time to children during this holiday season. Above is a sample coupon. Below is a website of several other creative coupons for moms, dads, grand parents, relatives, friends, etc. ~Enjoy!

<http://family.samhsa.gov/activities/coupons.aspx?UIMode=Cat&CatID=4#CatList>

Parent Community Network
PO Box 403
Crookston, MN 56716

HOLIDAY PARTY~ BE A RESPONSIBLE HOST

Be a Responsible Host: Know the Facts



The winter holidays are a time to enjoy the company of family, friends, and coworkers. Whether you are planning a dinner, informal gathering, or holiday party, your job as host is very important. Your many responsibilities include planning the menu or catering, organizing entertainment, and considering space arrangements. However, some of the most crucial details can be overlooked in all the frenzy. Perhaps your most important responsibility as host for a party or gathering where alcohol is involved is to take steps to ensure your guests' safety both during and after the celebration.

Drinking and driving is an all too familiar and tragic combination. More people are

on the road, and they are also consuming alcohol as a part of their holiday celebrations, so it's important to plan an event where non-alcoholic beverages and alternative transportation options are available.

Tips for Party Givers

Avoid making alcohol the main focus of social events.

Entertain guests with music, dancing, games, food, and lively conversation.

Did you know that one in three adults prefers a non-alcoholic beverage?

Make sure to offer plenty of non-alcoholic choices such as sparkling water, fancy juice drinks, and soft drinks.

Provide guests with nutritious and appealing foods to slow the effects of alcohol.

High protein and carbohydrate foods like cheese and meats are especially good. They stay in the stomach much longer, which slows the rate at which the body absorbs alcohol. Avoid salty foods that encourage people to drink more.

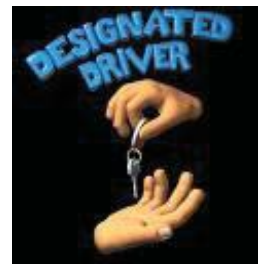
Stop serving drinks at least 1 hour before the end of the event. Instead, serve coffee, non-alcoholic beverages, and desserts.

Recruit people ahead of time who will not be drinking to help you make sure everyone has a safe ride home.

When the party's over your responsibility as a host is even more important at this point.

Should any of your guests be unable to drive due to alcohol impairment, be sure to provide several options. Below are a few suggestions:

- Be prepared to offer your guests alternate forms of transportation.
- Know what "safe ride" programs are available in your area.
- Offer your place to spend the night.
- Ask someone who was not drinking to drive your friend home.
- Don't let anyone who has been drinking drive.



SPOTLIGHT ON RESOURCES



Website of the Month
<http://family.samhsa.gov/>



Book of the Month
Hope's Boy
by Andrew Bridge



Parents Helping Parents

A support group for parents/caregivers with children of all ages. The group meets weekly to discuss the joys and frustrations of parenting. It is confidential, free, open to the public and there is free childcare provided.

All are welcome.

When: Tuesdays from 6:30pm - 8:00pm.

Where: Community Family Service Center (Formerly Carmen School), Crookston, MN

Questions? Please contact Karen @ 218.281.1343

HOLIDAY PARTY RECIPES

Recipes For a Really Fun Party

You don't need alcohol to feel good. The following non-alcoholic drink recipes are courtesy of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and Join Together, a national resource center for communities working to reduce substance abuse. Many of these unique drinks can add flavor to your party by giving your guests healthy, tasty alternatives to alcoholic beverages. Enjoy!



Citrus Collins

Fill a 10–12 oz. glass with ice cubes
 2 oz. orange juice
 1 oz. lemon juice
 1 oz. flavored syrup
 Fill with club soda. Garnish with an orange slice or a cherry.

Mai-Tai

1/2 cup pineapple juice
 1/4 cup orange juice
 1/4 cup club soda
 1 tbsp. cream of coconut
 1 tbsp. grenadine syrup
 In shaker or tall glass, combine ingredients; shake or stir to blend. Add crushed ice.

Lemon-Strawberry Punch

1 can (6 oz.) frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed
 1 pkg. frozen sliced strawberries
 1 can (6 oz.) frozen lemonade concentrate
 1 quart carbonated water
 1 quart ginger ale
 sliced bananas (garnish)
 sliced oranges or lemons (garnish)
 Combine frozen lemonade, strawberries (half-thawed with juice), and orange juice. Place in a punchbowl with ice. Just before serving, add carbonated water and ginger ale. Garnish with thin slices of orange or lemon. Serves 20.

Holiday Delight

Blend the following ingredients in a mixer:
 1/2 cup orange juice
 1/4 cup frozen strawberries
 1/4 cup cranapple juice
 1/4 cup half-and-half
 1/2 banana
 Pour into a tall glass.



The Natural Blend

Blend the following ingredients in a mixer:
 1/2 banana
 6 strawberries

2 oz. apple juice
 1/4 apple, with the skin
 2 oz. fresh pineapple
 1/2 cup ice
 Serve in a wine glass.
 Garnish with fresh strawberries.



Frosty Mocha

1/2 gal. chocolate ice cream, softened
 8 cups coffee, chilled
 1 pint half-and-half
 1 tsp. almond extract
 1/8 tsp. salt
 1 square semi-sweet chocolate, grated
 1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
 With mixer at low speed, beat ice cream and 3 cups coffee until smooth. In chilled 5–6 qt. punch bowl, stir ice cream mixture, half-and-half, almond extract, salt, and 5 cups of coffee until blended. Sprinkle with grated chocolate and cinnamon. Makes 16 8 oz. servings.

Fizzled Wine

1/2 cup white grape juice
 1/2 cup lemon-lime soda
 1/2 tsp. sugar (optional)
 Combine ingredients in tall glass; stir to blend. Add ice.
 Makes one serving.

WINTER FUN FOR THE FAMILY



Sledding

Snow angels



Holiday baking

Cross country or downhill skiing



Paper snowflakes



Spray snow with food coloring



Build a snowman

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Once you have decided to give back, contact local agencies, homeless shelters or a youth organization and find out what they need most, so that your effort will do the most good. Sometimes the things that are the most needed are quite inexpensive and very simple, and may just be your time. The experience of giving to others can teach a valuable lesson about appreciating what you have, and provide important discussions on your own family's values.



Keep loose change for the months up to the holiday season and donate it to help others have a happy holiday. Maybe you will even start a tradition of saving spare change all year, and use it to change someone's holiday each year.



Cookies are a popular family treat. You can bake some extra cookies, decorate them and give them to organizations that will distribute them to people in need. Invite a few friends, colleagues, family members or neighbors over to participate in the decorating and start a new tradition. Before you donate, be sure to ask first if the organization is able to use home baked goods.

In this economy, few of us have extra money, but if every time we went grocery shopping we picked up a few extra items and put them aside for the local food shelf, imagine what an effect it could have.

There are many opportunities to volunteer during the holiday season. From hospitals, churches, schools, senior centers to assisted living facilities, there are volunteer opportunities everywhere in your community. Get involved locally to find the right opportunity for you and your family to make a difference.

Kathleen Olson has spent her career focusing on parenting issues and believes that most issues we face in life go back to parenting. She is an Extension Educator in Family Relations for the University of Minnesota and has two children of her own. University of MN Extension Nov 2008

CELEBRATE THE SEASON

Take time to reflect on all the healthy choices you made in 2008!

Continue to focus on the overall health and wellness of you and

your family throughout the holiday season, and gear up for a healthy new year!



FUN FAMILY ACTIVITIES

The Holidays Can Be a Time for Fun Family Activities

Homemade Holiday Gift Wrap Stamping

Here's what you'll need:

- Large sheets of craft paper, brown paper bags, construction paper, paper or cloth napkins, felt
- Printing stamp material such as foam core, foam sheet, flat foam shoe insole, extra mouse pads, or heavy cardboard
- Stamp handle (film canister with lid, old individual size lotion bottle, vitamin bottle)
- Acrylic paint and paintbrush
- Glue
- Scissors



Cut out 2-inch shapes from the printing stamp material. Make the designs simple, such as a star, snowman, Christmas tree or bell. Glue the shape to the lid of the film canister or bottle. Let dry.

Snap the lid on the canister and you'll have a nice handle. (Tip: If you use a film canister as your handle, use that same canister as the handle for many stamp shapes that have been glued

onto lids. Just pop the lid off and exchange with another.)



Lay out craft paper or paper bags (cut open with printed side down). Pour paint into a shallow dish. Dip stamp directly into paint or with a paintbrush, paint the stamp. Stamp it on the paper. Stamp several times.

Do it in a row, in diagonals, any which way!

When your paper is dry, wrap your gift. Accent with bright ribbon and decorative items like dried flowers, berries and a stamped gift tag.

Apple Slice Designs

Slice an apple in half through the middle crosswise. Cut several thin, round slices from each of the halves.

Set them on a cutting board and let your child press tiny cookie cutters through the middle core section of each slice leaving a cute shape in the middle. Discard the cutout pieces containing seeds and the core. Nibble

on the rest!

"The Grandkids are Coming" Tip

To encourage healthy apple snacking, keep an assortment of small cookie cutters on hand and use them for making "apple-slice designs."

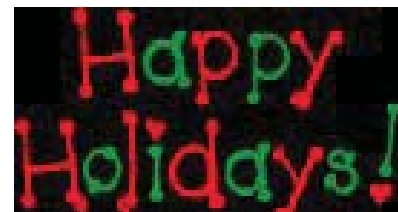
Use tiny Christmas-tree and star-shaped cookie cutters in December, a snowman in January, a heart in February and a bunny for spring.



For more fun ideas, order Donna's book *Fabulous Funstuff for Families* at 1-800 328 4648 or visit www.donnasday.com.

Adult supervision is required when performing these activities.
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Thank you to the Prevent Child Abuse MN Parent Power Newsletter for sharing this article.



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