

Keeping Christmas simple

Dianne lives in the outskirts of Toronto with her husband and 7 children. Since a few years ago, she developed the habit – the passion! – of writing to newspapers and going online to encourage hundreds and even thousands of persons to preserve fundamental values. A year ago, she started her own blog. A seasoned housewife, she addresses this article on how to prepare for Christmas to the families in her community.

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The Christmas season seems even more commercialized than ever with new toys, new movies, and more-and-more stuff to buy. Most stores had Christmas decorations for sale before Hallowe'en this year.

We need to teach our children how to get out of this consumer rut. There are plenty of ideas for homemade gifts, gifts of experience, gifts of time, and gifts to charity that are teaching experiences for our children. Why not make the holidays more than just gift-giving and at the same time memorable and fun?

Consider volunteering as a family to help with serving at a homeless shelter, or visiting those in the hospital or a nursing home? Or go deliver Christmas baskets for an

agency that helps those in need. This can be a real eye opener and a teachable moment.

Make sure you talk with your children's grandparents about how their parents celebrated Christmas. We can all learn a lot from the good old days. Let the children hear you speak about their memories of special dishes or customs. Ask them if gifts were a big part of the holidays? Record interviews of parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles on audio or video tape. Give this as a gift to other family members.

See if your child wants to pick a favorite children's charity, like a children's hospital or a literacy program and give a small amount from their piggy bank. Children learn a lot by giving.

Plan gifts that don't fit under the tree focusing on love and not material

gifts. Give a gift certificate that they can redeem with you for one whole day with you doing something really special, like going to a ball game, a park, camping, learning to bake a cake or "whatever" depending on their interests.

Do not forget homemade gifts. For the younger ones make a sandbox or a rope swing, or beautiful blocks that are very colorful. For teens put together a scrapbook of your family's heritage, or a book of favorite family family stories or recipes.

The world does indeed need Christmas and it is up to us to create good memories for them. Joyeux Noel. Feliz Navidad. Froehliche Weihnachten. Sung Tan Chuk Ha. Een Plesiergiege Kerfees. Merry Christmas.

Dianne Wood

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