



December 2008

Springboard Connections • *Holiday Edition*

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Thoughts of the Season

*" No exercise is better for the heart,
than reaching down to lift up another"*

Tim Russert , 1950-2008

When we take difficult circumstances and peel back some of the layers, we often find hidden blessings, or "silver linings". With all the bad news of the last two months, here are some thoughts on finding some unique blessings hidden beneath our many challenges.

Many of us have been seeking opportunities to turn this gift-giving season into a reconnection with the meaning behind the Holidays. Everywhere you turn, there are suggestions on ways to save, as well as discouraging news that retailers are missing projections! Have you been feeling the push-tug also? Encouragement to spend to stimulate the economy, paired with cautionary warnings to save to conserve your resources in economic crisis! It really is crazy, isn't it?

Perhaps it is time to take a middle-ground approach. For example, consider gifts supporting charitable organizations who depend on donations for their mission. If your donation is less this year than usual, it is still needed and appreciated. How can we make gift-giving a more active process? Have we been in a rut, tackling things as if it is a chore with a timeline and lots of expectations that serve to distance us from the reason we have this Holiday at all?

Consider gifts that touch the "essence" of who someone is, or what your relationship may be. Pare down the list! Invite friends to lunch and really check in on how they are; we all need to connect with our support systems in times of uncertainty. Have you noticed that we have been given blanket "permission" to simplify, and friends are taking advantage of it to do what we have all wanted to do for awhile! Emails and phone callers almost sound giddy, "let's skip gifts this year, what do you think? or, Why don't we "do" something together"!

There is a wonderful lesson in simplifying for our children, too. Honestly sharing a family goal of shifting priorities and including your children in ideas for a more authentic celebration of the Season may make this your best Holiday ever. Give over-scheduled kids time to slow down and be with their family members. Adults may need a refresher course in how to play, but let this year remind us to create memories for our children, and make sure those *memories include us!*

What if each family member requested something that makes them feel special, or

thoughtful and memorable gifts.



Great for kids



that they may not normally think to ask? You may want to set guidelines, such as it cannot be found at a mall or a superstore! The options are limitless: breakfast in bed, a 30 minute back massage, a candle-lit home cooked dinner, (hmm, I sense a theme here!). The gift is taking time and effort to make someone feel appreciated, investing yourself in your relationships.

Why not wrap up a home made gift certificate for some of your recipient's favorite activities? There will be presents under your tree, and a good chance no one will want to return them after the Holidays! This year I look forward to making cookies, inviting friends over for Wassail by the fireplace, and just appreciating my blessings. Springboard has given me many gifts this year, expanded my relationships and offered me concrete avenues to return a small portion of the support so many people have given to me over the years.

In 2008, we have unique permission to set aside the superficial, and rediscover what really matters. It takes some thought, and we may all be a little rusty at this. Should it take a recession to remind us that true gifts are not found in stores, but our hearts? No, but that is a silver lining for this Season, and may become a new tradition. Perhaps being fully "present" with those you love is the most wonderful gift of all.

Have a wonderful Holiday,
Janice, with Ann and Greg
Your Springboard Partners

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Wassail Recipe

Adapted from multiple recipes, then committed to memory, so all measurements are approximate and seem to make no difference at all! In a large soup pot, on low heat, simmer the following ingredients for an hour or more. Keep heat low and refridgerate any leftovers to reheat by the cup. Remove any citrus before storing, or it can get too strong. Add a fresh stick of cinammon to each serving.

Half gallon of apple cider (can use juice but we like the pulp and freshness of cider)

Large can of pineapple juice

1/2 C. frozen lemon juice (Minute Maid) defrosted

2 cups of orange juice

1/3 c. packed brown sugar (may add more to taste)

8-10 whole cloves

4-6 cinammon sticks, and sprinkled cinnamon, too.

A few minutes before serving, remove the cloves and cinnamon sticks and add fresh orange and or lemon slices.

adapted from *The Charlotte Cookbook, Junior League of Charlotte NC*

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