

Celebrate the season of giving with Gifts That Make a Difference

ASTORIA — Donating to or purchasing from a local nonprofit is a gift that makes a difference for the community. Donating in the name of someone else is an extra special gift, one that touches the heart of the person honored as well as the lives of friends, family, neighbors and strangers on the coast.

From noon to 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 10 at the Liberty Theatre, volunteers from 30 nonprofits from Cannon Beach to Long Beach will exhibit information at Gifts That Make a Difference — information on animal rescue and care, art and music and theater, reading and advocacy programs for kids, community emergency services, healthy local food, meals and shelter for women and the homeless, higher education, timebanking, community radio, hospice, and the coast's scenic, cultural and historic landmarks.

Donors make contributions to individual nonprofits at their tables or contrib-



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Nancy Magathan and Barbara Crass of Lower Columbia Hospice visit a Northern saw-whet owl from the Wildlife Center of the North Coast at Gifts That Make a Difference.

ute to multiple groups at checkout, using cash, credit or debit, or check. CASA, Wildlife Center of the North Coast, and the Astoria Warming Center will also accept "in-kind" donations. (See sidebar.)

For the strictly tangible-minded, groups offer ornaments, performance

tickets, books, T-shirts and other items related to their work.

Gifts That Make a Difference began in 2006, part of a growing trend toward holiday shopping that's local and stress-free. While many alternative fairs throughout the U.S. feature local crafts, others focus on projects for

WISH LISTS

Astoria Warming Center: New men's underwear, warm jackets, rain gear.

CASA: Children's books in new or very good condition, particularly those with firm covers.

Wildlife Center of the North Coast: Costco or Home Depot gift cards, Costco-brand Nitrile exam gloves (size medium), Clorox bleach and disinfecting wipes, Simple Green concentrate, garbage bags, concentrated laundry detergent, heavy duty scrubbing sponges and scouring pads, first class stamps.

poor countries. Founder Caren Black wanted an event to benefit the local community.

"I wasn't sure how many nonprofits there were here. When I began looking them up, I was astounded to find over a hundred," she says.

"These organizations are supporting our local communities every day of the year. What better way to refocus our holiday experience around local, meaningful giving than to support them?"

All proceeds raised at Gifts That Make a Difference go directly into local community programs. But, Black says groups participate as much for the networking opportunities as the funds raised.

"Everyone gets to talk

with donors directly, unlike an envelope in the mail. And volunteers get to exchange information and ideas with their peers in other organizations," Black says. "It's a beautiful holiday party that benefits everyone."

One of those groups is Clatsop CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates), which trains community volunteers to stand up for abused and neglected children. CASA's advocacy helps ensure that these children have the best possible chance for a safer, more secure home life. CASA has participated since Gifts That Make a Difference's inception in 2006.

Executive Director Julia Mabry says, "This event is unique. It truly embodies the spirit of giving that is so often lost in the holiday season. Where else can you shop for gifts that build a better community?"

Georgina Jones, director of The Healing Circle / Victory Over Child Abuse camps, leads another nonprofit that has participated every year because, "Gifts that make a difference is a great way for the community to see our nonprofit and others as a way to give differently. It allows us to talk to people who may not have known about our program prior. Most importantly it allows one to donate in honor of someone and have that money be utilized for healing of children in our community — now, that's a gift."

Adopt an owl for someone? Wildlife Center of the

North Coast founder Sharnelle Fee began bringing one of the smallest of their rescued wildlife to the fair in its first year and then-apprentice Josh Saranpaa soon took over this duty. Now the director, Saranpaa notes, "I really like the gifts fair because of the collaboration and partnership with other nonprofits, and it's a great opportunity to connect with people in our community." That is, if he can tear the people away from the owl accompanying him.

Admission is free. Enter through the Liberty Theatre's main lobby on Commercial Street. There are complimentary refreshments and local musicians including Larkin Stentz on flute and hammered dulcimer, members of Swing Cats of Astoria, and a surprise visit from a choir of carolers, and of course Santa and Mrs. Claus. Special guests Luke Ydstie and Kati Claborn of Blind Pilot will perform from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Guests who make donations will enter drawings for free gifts from sponsors: Columbia River Coffee, dinners at the Uptown Café, and a basket of seafood from Bornstein Seafood. Donors giving \$100 or more could win a spa getaway at Cannery Pier Hotel or a handmade quilt by local artist Laurie Caplan. Other business sponsors include Blue Scorcher Bakery Café, Columbia Bank, Englund Marine and Thrivent Financial. Refreshments will be provided by Astoria Coffeehouse & Bistro, Baked Alaska, Bridgewater Bistro, and 3 Cups Coffee House.

Three community nonprofits serve as organizing hosts — Lower Columbia TimeBank, Liberty Theatre and United Way Clatsop County — and more than two dozen volunteers work together to bring the event to the coast. For more information, visit www.GiftsThat-MakeADifference.org or call 503-325-6886.

"A Holiday Celebration"

Portland Gay Men's Chorus

Sunday
December 18
3pm

Astoria High School

1001 W. Marine Drive

Tickets at the door:
\$15

Proceeds Benefit
Clatsop Community College
Performing Arts Center

For more information:
www.NorthCoastChorale.org

North Coast Chorale
presents a holiday concert

Here We Come A-Caroling!

Sat., Dec. 10 at 7 pm &
Sun., Dec. 11 at 2 pm

CCC Performing Arts Center (PAC)

16th and Franklin Sts., Astoria

Tickets: \$10 for adults

www.northcoastchorale.org