

OPINION



THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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OUR VIEWS

Consider giving the gift of time

As we wish all our readers a Merry Christmas and an enjoyable holiday season, it is fitting to reflect on some positive aspects of this week and next week’s fresh start with the New Year.

Whatever one’s religious beliefs, Christmas and the coinciding holidays in other faith traditions is a time when giving and family are most often at the forefront.

A common meme posted on many Facebook pages at this time of year dutifully explains that “happy holidays” is a safer approach in our diverse society, because 27 religions or groups have some cause for celebration at this time of year.

Without wanting to open up that debate, we’re content to wish our readers the best during this holiday season, however they celebrate.

Giving presents is a tradition that crosses international boundaries in different ways. We learned recently that one of Iceland’s Christmas practices is exchanging books as gifts. Now that is one we can get behind.

But let’s not forget those who cannot afford to exchange any presents. Despite some positive fluctuations in economic fortunes for the very rich, we don’t observe hordes of smiling people wandering the streets of Clatsop County with bulging wallets muttering, “everything is going so well for me these days.”

Philanthropical efforts, by their very definition, rely on people giving money, either in their lifetimes or through their estates. On this page, we have long urged people of all ages to make sure their estates are properly planned, and to seek ways to be remembered in a positive way by generous planned giving.

But that’s not for everyone. Despite the many advances in



The Astoria Column reflects the holiday spirit.

Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

our modern society, the escalating cost of health care and daily living means many of us are one catastrophic illness away from bankruptcy and three paychecks or fewer away from sleeping on Uncle Fred’s couch.

So if presents are out of the question, here’s an alternate suggestion. How about giving the gift of time?

When our parents or grandparents die, many of us are filled with regret about the lack of time we spent with them in their declining years. That’s an easy one to change. Go spend some time with them. Sure, those chocolates or colorful sweaters or novelties are fun to give. But time is the one thing that’s so much more pre-

cious; and it’s the one thing they don’t have.

Local organizations that help others always need assistance — year round — because they rely on an often dwindling core of volunteers to get the work done. Pick one, any one, and step up to help. And not just during the holidays. Give your time to them, and get back the reward of helping others.

And lastly, another suggestion, also with no price tag attached.

If we have one wish for a gift that Santa can bring down the chimney and distribute around the tree for all of us to receive on Christmas morning, it is the one gift that we can all give freely. And giving it is a reward in itself, for both the giver and the recipient.

It is the gift of kindness. It costs nothing to be kind. And the most religious person, and his or her atheist neighbor, can give in equal measure.

Our world is sometimes a bleak place. And no more so than during Christmas. Depression during the holidays — when everyone is “supposed” to be jolly and bright — is all too common.

There’s another Internet meme that shows Gandhi’s face and suggests, “be the change you want to see.”

The invitation is out there. Join us in embracing it. Be kind. Try helping your fellow humans. In person. With your time and your kindness. The rewards are immeasurable.

