



Staff photo by E.J. Harris  
**Jerilynn Stephens signs Christmas carols while bell ringing for the Salvation Army in front of Wal-Mart on Tuesday in Hermiston.**

# Put giving twists on holiday traditions

Family Features

If giving is an important aspect of your holiday traditions, you may find yourself repeating the same activities year after year. While the giving feels good, it can also grow monotonous. This season, make your generosity feel fresh and new by putting your own unique twist on your favorite holiday traditions.

**Cook extras for the cookie exchange.** A baking party is a wonderful way to kick off the holiday season. The delightful aromas and hours of laughter blend with the sweet treats for a cheery (and tasty) tradition. This year, instead of simply baking cookies to trade with your friends, encourage everyone to bake several extra batches and take them to a local soup kitchen or senior living community.

**Extend a seasonal icon.** The ringing bells and red kettles found outside of retailers across the nation are nearly as symbolic of the holiday season as twinkling lights and red-nosed reindeer.

During the holiday season, more than 3 million families and children rely on The Salvation Army to provide them with a warm meal on Christmas Day or toys for their children. This year, the organization is making it easy to extend those kettle collections offline as well with the Fight for Good campaign, which allows you to create your own fundraiser, including setting a goal and designating the cause you'd like to support. Visit [redkettlereason.org](http://redkettlereason.org) to create your own fundraising page and encourage friends and family to donate and start



their own pages.

In addition, you can donate to the Red Kettle Campaign by dropping dollars and coins into the thousands of Red Kettles found in front of retail stores and on street corners, or donate your time by contacting your local Salvation Army for volunteer opportunities.

**Add a special pre-dinner starter.** The holidays bring plenty of opportunities for celebratory meals, and it's the perfect time to ask everyone to lend an hour or two to a good cause. Instead of spending hours around a table, spend some of that time catching up while you volunteer at a food bank or other charitable organization. When you make your way on to dinner, your festive spirit may be even stronger for the difference you made together.

**Travel with care.** As you flit from one place to the next checking off your list of holiday chores, you may encounter any number of homeless and needy families. Instead of simply handing

over a few dollars as you pass by, keep a supply of holiday care packages in the car. Include items like warm socks or gloves, toiletries and non-perishable snacks. You may even want to include an uplifting note to share some festive seasonal cheer.

**Give gifts with meaning.** If you're like most people, there are many on your shopping list who truly don't need a thing. Instead of wracking your brain, donate to a cause in their honor. It may be the foundation of a beloved alma mater or an organization serving orphans in the country where they honeymooned. The more personal the connection, the more gratefully it will likely be received. After making your donation, simply gift your recipient with a card that explains the contribution you've made in their name.

No matter which cause you support, a fresh approach to your charitable giving can renew your spirit and enthusiasm for helping those in need this holiday season.

# Four ways to survive holiday gifting

Family Features

While the holidays might be the most wonderful time of the year for children, the gifting season can quickly spiral out of control for unprepared shoppers.

These four tips can help you conquer holiday gifting like a pro:

**1. Get organized.** The secret to conquering the holiday season is having a plan. Take 10-15 minutes to update your calendar with all your holiday parties, family engagements, secret Santa exchanges or any other gifting commitments. Make sure to include dates, locations, times and even specifics, like themes, if they're available. If you have multiple holiday events, you might even color-coordinate your planner for an easy visual reminder. Sync your events across all smart devices for an easy glance at the touch of a button.

**2. Find your go-to gifts.** As an adult, deciphering what kind of gifts a child wants in this digital age can be tricky. Some classics like brick toys are still a hit with kids of all ages. Studies show that 60 percent of children love playing with brick toys and more than half of parents love that their kids



do, according to Mattel Global Consumer Insights. Try product lines like Mega Construx and Mega Bloks, which combine the fun of brick toys with popular franchises to create exciting products for kids. Find more holiday gift ideas at [shop.mattel.com](http://shop.mattel.com).

**3. Wrap gifts early.** Now that you have your plan in place, save time by purchasing all the gifts you will need for the holidays and wrapping them at one time. Prevent the stress of a last-minute gift wrap run by pre-wrapping gifts and simply labeling them with removable sticky notes.

**4. Build a gifting closet.** Once you have your gifts wrapped and ready to go, consider using an old crate or storage container and turning it into a "gifting closet." Insert dividers to

separate the gifts by age range and set aside your treasure trove in an easy-to-reach storage area. You can even use this closet year-round for birthdays and other gifting events. On the day of the party, simply open your gifting closet, grab a gift for the right age and head out the door.

Another option to save time and money this holiday season is to enter for the chance to win a gifting closet with \$1,000 worth of Mega products to help you conquer the gifting season. To enter the sweepstakes, post an original holiday photo to Instagram or Twitter with a short caption that includes why the entrant likes to give or receive construction toys as gifts. For full details, visit [rules.prizelogic.com/MegaSocialSweeps](http://rules.prizelogic.com/MegaSocialSweeps).

## Gilliam County

### Light Festival & Parade

•Saturday, Dec. 2; 5:30 p.m.  
 •Downtown Condon  
[www.condonchamber.org](http://www.condonchamber.org)  
 Free. People are encouraged to come early to shop at local merchants, enjoy caroling on Main Street and to view a 4 p.m. showing of "A Charlie Brown Christmas" at the Liberty Theater. After party at the Elks Lodge includes food, drinks and pictures with Santa.

### Winter Walapalooza

•Thursday, Dec. 7; 4-7 p.m.  
 •Gronquist Building & Alkali Park, Arlington  
[www.facebook.com/ArlingtonORChamber](http://www.facebook.com/ArlingtonORChamber)  
 Free. From 4-6 p.m., people can build a snowman (using any materials EXCEPT snow) for the S'no'man Contest at Alkali Park. They remain on display through Dec. 21. From 6-7, enjoy chilly dogs, hot chocolate, door prizes, live entertainment by the "Community Carolers" and the official tree lighting.

## Athena

### Athena Holiday Bazaar

•Saturday, Dec. 2; 9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
 •Athena Elementary School, 375 S. Fifth S

## Echo

### Holiday Open House

•Saturday, Nov. 25; 10 a.m.-6 p.m.  
 •Vintage Shops @ Echo Station, 211 W. Main St.  
[www.facebook.com/shop-satechostation](http://www.facebook.com/shop-satechostation)  
 Free. Door prize drawings, discounts, drinks and treats.

### Echo Toy Run

•Saturday, Dec. 2; noon

•Main Street, Echo Motorcyclists (and other vehicles) invited to bring a new unwrapped toy to deliver to Good Shepherd Medical Center.

### Christmas in Echo Holiday Lights

[www.echo-oregon.com/christmas.html](http://www.echo-oregon.com/christmas.html)  
 Free. The Echo Booster Club sponsors a Christmas Lighting Contest. To encourage people to put up decorations, new homeowners are given a strand of lights. Most years, at least 60 percent of the homes are decorated.

## Helix

### Light Up Our Community

•Sunday, Dec. 3; 1-3 p.m., light pick-up  
 •Thursday, Dec. 14; 6-7 p.m., contest  
 •Helix City Hall  
 Free. Helix residents can pick up free Christmas lights to encourage home displays. A contest will be held Dec. 14, culminating in hot cocoa and voting at city hall. The winner receives a water bill credit.

### Christmas Tree Lighting

•Thursday, Dec. 7; 6 p.m.  
 Free soup starting at 4:30 p.m. Ceremony includes innovation, carols and cookies.

## Pilot Rock

### Thanksgiving at Archie's

•Thursday, Nov. 23; noon-6 p.m.  
 •Archie's Restaurant, 194 W. Main St.  
 Free. In its seventh year, the restaurant serves a Thanksgiving meal to anyone who shows up. In addition, it serves as a fundraiser for the Pilot Rock Food Pantry. People are invited to donate cash or non-perishable food items to help those in need.

## Winterphest, Bazaar & Light Parade

•Saturday, Dec. 2; 10 a.m.-2 p.m.; 5 p.m. parade  
 •Pilot Rock Community Center  
[www.facebook.com/events/518993265118010](http://www.facebook.com/events/518993265118010)  
 Free. After shopping for homemade goodies and gifts, get ready for the Light Parade, followed by a chili feed (\$) and float awards.

## Stanfield

### Santa's Workshop

•TBA  
 •Stanfield Public Library, 180 W. Coe Ave.  
[www.facebook.com/stanfieldpubliclibrary](http://www.facebook.com/stanfieldpubliclibrary)  
 \$5. Craft, picture with Santa and cookie decorating. Details on the date are being worked out with Santa's agent. Call the library at 541-449-1254 for more information.

## Umatilla

### Christmas Trees & Gift Shoppe

•Holiday season  
 •Fire Station No. 2, McNary  
[www.facebook.com/UmatillaVFA](http://www.facebook.com/UmatillaVFA)  
 Free admission. Photos with Santa to be announced.

## Weston

### Christmas Lighting Contest Party

•Friday, Dec. 15, evening  
 •Memorial Hall  
 Free. The community puts up lights and decorates. During the party, trailers with hay bales take people around to view the displays. Refreshments served at Memorial Hall.



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