

## Think Outside the Box for Gifts This Year

It's time to think outside the box this year. Take your traditional idea of gift-giving and spin it on its head. This won't be hard. Who says a gift needs be an object? Why not think about services—especially those right here in our own community.

This column is inspired by an email that is floating around about starting a new tradition this year for Christmas by trying to support more American businesses—not purchasing a bunch of cheaply-made stuff from abroad. (I got the email from my cousin-in-law DeeDee—thanks!) The gist of the email is this: support our small local businesses and American-made products. Consider purchasing a gift certificate from a local business to keep your money in our community. Following is a summary of some of the ideas:

How about a gift certificate from your local hair salon or barber or a gym membership? Who wouldn't appreciate getting their car detailed or an oil change at a local shop? Perhaps that grateful gift receiver would like his driveway sealed, or lawn mowed for the summer, or driveway plowed all winter, or games at the local golf course.

For kids there are music lessons, a class at the Arts Castle, tickets to the zoo or a gift certificate for the local bowling alley, roller rink, ice skating rink or some other recreation place. Who says they need another video game or electronic device? Give them an experience, not another thing to plug into!

There are thousands of independently-owned restaurants -- all offering gift certificates. And, if your intended isn't the fancy eatery sort, what about a half dozen breakfasts at the local breakfast joint or a gift card for coffee every morning from a local coffee shop.

Thinking about a heartfelt gift for mom? Mom might love a local cleaning service for a day or maybe tickets to a local play or concert. How about a computer "tune-up" from a local service for Dad or a voucher to get his taxes done this coming spring or golf lessons?

Hopefully some of these ideas will help spur your imagination and get you thinking outside the box this holiday season. To be even more "green" with your gift, spare the wrapping paper and think of another creative way to present your gift—yes, the Sunday comics in the newspaper would be a wonderful start!

*Tuesday Trippier lives in Delaware, is a writer and mother of four with a special interest in keeping things green and local.*