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Tri-County Health Department Offers Imaginative Holiday Gift Ideas

With the holiday season upon us, shoppers are always looking for a unique present, and Tri-County Health Department has some creative suggestions for everyone's gift list.

"The hot gift trend this year is for eco-friendly, energy-efficient items," states Dr. Richard Vogt, Executive Director of Tri-County Health Department. "The other major story is the concern about recalled toys that contain lead paint or toxic ingredients. A complete list of the most recent warnings and recalls is available on our website, www.tchd.org."

Energy-efficient gifts include bicycles, a programmable thermostat, insulating replacement windows, earth-friendly garden equipment, energy-efficient appliances, compact fluorescent light bulbs and LED nightlights or an emergency generator. Big spenders looking for a perfect gift can choose from a variety of hybrid cars, or perhaps even the \$98,000 Tesla electric sports car.

Other eco-friendly stocking stuffers include canvas grocery bags, rechargeable batteries, weather band radio, smoke and carbon dioxide detectors, water-saving shower heads, pedometers or a water filter pitcher instead of bottled water. "Recycled" gifts include antiques, family heirlooms and select personal items.

Eco-friendly gift wrapping ideas include attractive recycled papers; using newspapers for wrapping—such as using the Sunday comics for kids' gifts or *The Wall Street Journal* for business and office gifts; recycling maps or sheet music; using a new extension cord to tie up gift boxes with electronics inside or a jump rope for sports gifts; and accenting gifts with items such as scarves and bandanas or pine cones and evergreen boughs instead of paper and ribbon. Examples of creative gift wrapped boxes are pictured on www.tchd.org/gifts.htm.

Toys are the most popular gifts for kids, so choose those that keep a child's mind and body active. Some toys can be dangerous so parents must read warning labels for age recommendations and choking hazards. Gifts other than toys include warm winter clothing,

reflective sneakers and ID bracelets engraved with important numbers.

Outdoor enthusiasts will appreciate gifts of warm winter gear, camping equipment, an all-in-one survival tool, a GPS tracking device, sporting goods, a yearly parks pass or a bicycle. “Always include a safety helmet with the gift of a bicycle. Helmets are proven to reduce the risk of traumatic brain injuries by 85%. Also consider a headlight, bell, blinking safety lights, reflective clothing, wrist guards and kneepads,” Vogt adds.

Health and environment magazine subscription gifts include healthy living, gardening, parenting, active seniors, cooking, organic lifestyles, environmental sciences and nature publications.

Nature calendars are a nice gift, along with a membership in a favorite environmental organization. Or you might consider a donation to a favorite charity—one that fights a particular disease, supports the earth, provides disaster relief, or offers public health services like immunizations, clean water and basic nutrition to underdeveloped countries.

Drivers will appreciate a winter car safety kit consisting of warm gloves, cellphone, ice scraper, tire gauge, collapsible shovel, cat litter for tire traction, jumper cables, first aid kit, dried food, bottled water and a spare blanket.

Seniors and baby boomers might like warm clothing, sturdy bathtub handrails, non-skid mats, shower massages, comforters, heated booties, or motion-activated lights and timers. Large print items include books, magazines, calendars, crossword puzzles, address books and playing cards. “Talking” gadgets that compensate for vision impairment include a watch, thermometer, clock, calculator, bathroom scale and books on tape.

The gourmet cook might like healthy cookbooks, a cooking class, a BBQ fork with temperature gauge, a crock pot, juicer, steamer or fat-free cookware. Food baskets make great gifts, but they don’t have to be full of fattening cookies or candy. More nutritious items include fresh fruit, meats, cheese and crackers, canned goods, exotic oils and wholesome home-baked goodies.

A healthy, nutritious gift includes a seasonal share in a community-supported farm which provides weekly fresh produce in the summer, and donations of non-perishable food are always welcome at food banks, and go a long way to help needy families in our own area.

Santa could stand to lose a few pounds, so physical fitness gift ideas include sporting goods, exercise equipment, resistance bands, step counters, heart rate monitors, health club memberships and exercise videos ... all followed up with a gift certificate for a massage.

You can also give the gift of life. The American Heart Association has a new “CPR Anytime” kit for \$29.95. In less than one hour, you learn how to perform CPR, and you keep

the manikin and instructional DVD and use it to teach five of your friends. Each of them can borrow your kit or buy one of their own, and share it with five friends, so that the number of trained life savers increases exponentially. www.americanheart.org

And don't forget the family pet, with an ID tag, a reflective collar, microchip, healthy chew toys, or a donation to a shelter or clinic.

Decorate your tree with the new, energy efficient, LED light strings that use one-tenth the energy of traditional lights. At the end of the season, recycle your tree, wreath and garland at community collection points which turn trees into mulch and compost. Or better yet, buy a living tree and plant it in the yard after the holiday season.

Lastly, *really* big givers can provide a \$1,000,000 gift to various public health schools across the nation, including the Harvard School of Public Health, the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, or the new planned Colorado School of Public Health, which opens in the fall of 2008.

A complete section of gift ideas, photos of eco-friendly gift wrapping ideas, and warnings from the Consumer Product Safety Commission are available on the Tri-County Health Department website at www.tchd.org/gifts.htm.

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