

For #GivingTuesday, let's gift our way out of cluttered homes

Petula Dvorak, The Washington Post, Published 4:40 pm PST, Thursday, November 28, 2019

My husband calls it “Thanksgiving Work Camp” and he isn’t happy about it.

It’s those hours (days) before the guests come that we spend frantically cleaning — and not stashing — the drifts, piles and mountains of detritus accumulated around the house over the past year.

The battle against stuff is constant. And a ridiculous, first-world problem. And the worst part? All of this cleaning happens only as we begin celebrating the season where we acquire more stuff.

Stop. Let’s all stop buying.

But wait! What about the joy of giving?

Two things go into giving a present — the cost and the consideration. And when you can’t find the perfect balance of both, you get things like the small Tiffany dresser clock my mother-in-law gave me. Twice. (We laugh about it now.)

Or a Black Friday score that was hard-fought, but all wrong in hindsight. (Yes, the toilet mini-golf set seemed perfect at the time.)

I have your answer for all of this — our annual charity giving guide! Let’s turn #GivingTuesday into this season’s gift guide. By donating to a charity as a gift to your loved ones, you eliminate clutter, can brag about how much you spent and show them you care about their passions by donating to something they love. Perfect, right?

For the player

Know a child-at-heart who is always trying to get everyone to play? Don’t get them another lawn game that will die in the garage. Donate to [Let’s Play America](#) in their name.

Pat Rumbaugh, 60, the co-founder of the Takoma Park-based nonprofit group, is the tireless Play Lady, organizing community events around the region that encourage people of all ages to get outside and play.

[Let the people play!](#)

She speaks at conferences and [in a TEDx Talk](#) about the importance of play — scientific evidence shows that the synapses in kids’ brains erupt like a fireworks show when they’re playing. And she helps communities create play events, telling me about the day she assisted one neighborhood with throwing a block party.

“Today when I walked the dogs by the street closed for kids to play, the joy of seeing kids up to age 12 having a blast playing several activities brought tears to my eyes,” she said. “Kids need and deserve fun, free, outdoor playtime everyday.”

I’ve been watching her events bloom over the years as she gets kids away from their screens and into some mud and reminds adults how fun it is to jump rope; she’s coaching communities and families on ways to regain the lost love of play.

And I admire her tenacity and optimism. Earlier this year, she was roped into a phone scheme by a very convincing scammer and ended up losing \$16,000 of the nonprofit group’s money. Gifts to the Let’s Play organization will help them recover from that.

For the animal lover

Resist the urge to buy this friend another tuxedo collar or squeak toy for their fur baby. Instead, help others find the slobbery love of their lives with a donation to one of the most awesome animal rescue groups around — [Lucky Dog](#).

I am biased, totally. I flew with Lucky Dog on their rescue mission last year to Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria and was supposed to come home with just a story. But I’m a sucker, and our family now includes an adorable little rat terrier mix — found cowering in the storm on an abandoned coffee farm — whom we’ve named Chica. Cheeky for short, which is also more accurate.

[A plane full of yowls and yelps took off from Puerto Rico](#)

Lucky Dog — which is also Lucky Cat, they do both — rescues animals from high-kill shelters all over our region and has saved more than 15,000 lives.

For the foodie

No, no more Himalayan salt flights for your foodie friends. Give to one of the places that help produce the chefs and kitchen staffs that feed the region.

It’s one of the areas dominant nonprofit groups, and [D.C. Central Kitchen](#) keeps surprising and inspiring us. Not only do they provide healthy meals for school programs and shelters, the key to this remarkable organization is their dedication to education.

[No job? No school? No plan? No problem — you’re in!](#)

They are a powerhouse — using their boot-camp programs and farm to train local folks struggling to find a career path. This year, they launched a new cafe in a D.C. food desert. The cafe is also a food lab and academy for younger kids — it is remarkable and a huge asset to the community and the District’s food scene.

For the book lover

Books, books everywhere. Yet my 12-year-old surprised me this week with a song he wrote and recorded himself — “Reading Sucks.” At least it has literary references in it.

To help others do a better job growing young readers, the [Maryland Book Bank](#) works to clear your bookshelves (to make room for more) and create young readers who will be there to buy your memoir before the movie comes out. Who could ask for more?

For the home-repair geeks

Do you have friends or relatives who like going to hardware stores and rummage sales just to browse tools? I know all about it; I’m married to a home-repair fanatic. But guess what? There’s a way to honor their love of building and maybe even inspire them to build for others.

Sure, everyone knows about Habitat for Humanity. But did you know they have a special program to help veterans get repairs or modifications (for mobility issues) made to their homes? Donate to their [Veterans Build](#) fund in honor of your gear geeks, and maybe encourage them to volunteer with this group to give them more places to use all those tools.

Now, wasn’t that easy? And you didn’t even have to fight for a parking space.

Happy giving.