



GIVING BACK

The ultimate gift to your family

What better way to brighten your family's holiday season than by giving back. From involvement with large community organizations to giving within your own home, your family will benefit by switching focus from getting to sharing with others.

Building Appreciation.

Building a culture of generosity in our own homes begins with teaching appreciation and contentment. You will realize your abundance when you understand how much the average American family has. Feeling that abundance is the first step to shifting our attitudes towards giving to those who have less, or simply giving to generate deeper happiness.

Giving thanks can be built into each day by going around the dinner

table and sharing positive things about the day. Counteract the scarcity mentality—otherwise known as the “gimmies”—by regularly focusing on all that your family has. Not just material possessions but also health, love and a good meal. Building consistent appreciation is key to becoming a family of givers.

Children, teens and parents alike can easily show appreciation all year long by making it a habit to write thank you notes. Not just for when a gift is received, thank you notes can be written to teachers, a helpful librarian, a sibling and truly anyone showing kindness. Thank you notes need not be fancy or expensive. A slip of paper in your child's lunch box thanking him for making his bed is just as effective.

Giving Back Ideas

Don't forget the people you see every day. Keep giving all year long!

Drive an elderly neighbor where they need to go:
ElderHelpofSanDiego.org

Send a soldier a care package or a letter:
OperationGratitude.org

Animals need you, too!
AnimalCenter.org/volunteer

Celebrate gratitude:
GreaterGood.berkeley.edu/raising_happiness

Ask what teachers really want:
DonorsChoose.org

Family Giving

Nurture a giving mindset by giving back to one another in your own home. Sit down as a family and write a list of giving ideas from one person to another. Teens can babysit younger siblings for a parent's night out. All ages can wash the car. Just asking what extra jobs around the house need doing will generate lots of ideas.

Giving will become commonplace when simple habits are in place. A great anti-clutter habit in your home will double as a gift to others. When an item is brought into the home, the new owner takes a similar item out, either for donation or to be passed along to a particular person in mind. It's easier to let go of a favorite outgrown item when you see it again on a thankful younger cousin, and it's fun!

SanDiego Air & Space Museum

How things Fly...
Experience the Adventure

SPECIAL EXHIBITION

Closing Soon - Don't Miss It!
www.sandiegoairandspace.org
619.234.8291

LEGO TRAIN CITY

At The SAN DIEGO MODEL RAILROAD MUSEUM Exhibiting
Nov. 20 - Jan. 18
www.sdmrm.org 619-696-0199

Giving Back Locally

The holidays are the perfect time to boost support for local businesses and San Diego is full of unique shops bursting with gifts for every budget.

“When families shop at locally owned stores, they are making a statement with each dollar spent. That they enjoy the unique experience a small shop can offer and that they want their money to stay in our local economy,” says Christy Jaynes, owner of Progress, a small boutique furniture shop filled with unique goodies in the San Diego neighborhood of South Park. “It is an investment in our culture and community, which is a powerful way of giving.” www.progressouthpark.com

You can also give the gift of a special activity taught by a local master. Knitting, pottery, photography and studio art are all great options. The Spanish Village Art Center (www.spanishvillageart.com) in Balboa Park offers a great variety of classes all in one place and don't overlook the new hot spots in the growing Barrio Logan Arts District (www.barrioartsdistrict.com).

Patronizing local resale shops means you're also giving back to our planet. Gently used books make great gifts, especially older editions. Share thoughts on a favorite title by writing an inscription to the receiver.

Giving back by supporting local live theatre can make for great gift ideas too. San Diegans are lucky to have many nationally acclaimed shows offered at larger venues around town, but don't forget community dance recitals and holiday youth theatre productions that are perfect for seating young children up close at a fraction of the cost. Why not invite a neighbor to join you?

Featured Organizations & Giving Families

Meals-on-Wheels

www.meals-on-wheels.org

Meals-on-Wheels is a countywide program that is dedicated to making sure no senior ever goes hungry. Molly Wauson's family began volunteering at

Meals-on-Wheels six years ago because she wanted to instill in her children a desire to reach out to others and because Meals on Wheels willingly allows children to participate.

“The kids now ask when we are going to deliver meals and genuinely look forward to seeing all the people on our route. Judging by the smiles from both the seniors and my children, it's hard to say who benefits most from Meals on Wheels,” says Wauson.

Jewish Family Services

www.jfssd.org

Monica and Larry Simpson's family regularly volunteer at Jewish Family Services (JFS), especially because of the wide variety of giving options.

“Through JFS we help stock food at the Hand Up food pantry as well as distribute goods to military families; we also prepare and serve dinners at Rachael's Women's Shelter. We feel it is very important to give back to the community and this teaches our children a valuable life lesson. The bonus is that our kids really enjoy these activities and it is good family bonding time. When finished, my children feel a great sense of personal accomplishment,” says Monica.

Another JFS “giving back” activity is Embrace-a-Family which helps low-income families experience a joyous holiday season by donating new and unused gifts. Each family will receive a wish list from a family in need and a personalized story about the family's situation (www.jfssd.org/embrace).

Year-round Giving

Utilize the spirit of the holiday season and the new year to begin a habit of giving back year round. Start simple around your neighborhood and grow from there. The joyful satisfaction that comes with giving is unmatched. Get kids started early and it will be a part of their lives for years to come. It's truly a win-win.

Laura Pardo writes from central San Diego.