

CARING FOR YOUR LIVE CHRISTMAS TREE



Written by Lisa Greer

Saturday, 10 November 2007

Nothing beats the fresh pine scent of a live, beautifully glowing Christmas tree this time of year, but the care is sometimes a deterrent for those not wanting to deal with the watering and needle shedding.

In addition, real trees have a tendency to lean and even fall over. I've had this happen more than once, and believe me, it is an area of frustration to decorate, redecorate and redecorate again. But, purchasing a manufactured tree takes away from the ambience. It would be as if we were saying Christmas is an inconvenience so we'll do something artificial this year to celebrate the birth of Christ. No mess, not much fuss, and no sacrifices to have the beauty and symbolism of a real tree.

Since this concept really doesn't work for us, and it certainly takes away from the mood of the season, I have comprised a list of tips for having a real tree that should serve to get through all the inconveniences with minimal stress. If you've never had a live tree, I would encourage you to try it this year. And if you have in the past, it may be worth your while to try it again using these tips.

- Sometimes you'll find the tree you've selected has a crooked, or even twisted trunk, which results in the tree falling from the weight of the ornaments. The best method I've found to deal with this problem is to use a couple of flat, heavy rocks, or even a couple of bricks. You can take clear fishing string to tie around the tree trunk, and then around the rocks or bricks to anchor the tree and steady it. The string will not be visible if you do this by tying it off at the top half of the tree, then run it down through the branches to the rocks on the floor and wrap several times before securing a knot. Once the tree skirt is put on and the presents set underneath, no one will ever know you have those anchors there. If this concept doesn't sound like it's for you, another option would be to invest in a Christmas tree stand with a stabilizer, such as the one offered at Brylane Home at the link below.



<http://www.brylanelhome.com/decor/Christmas-Tree-Stand.aspx?Pflid=113843&DeptId=15592&ProductTypeId=1&PurchaseType=0>

- Real trees need a lot of water for the first 24 hours, and after about a week, you'll notice not having to water it as often. To keep from making so many trips from the water faucet to the tree, use empty 2 liter coke bottles, rinsing them and filling them with a solution of water and tree preservative purchased at the tree farm. I keep three or four of these filled and ready to pour into the tree stand. After the first week, be sure to check the water at least once a day, and don't let it go dry. Doing so may dry out the needles and create a potential fire hazard. As an alternative, you may want to consider investing in an automatic watering system such as the one offered at the link below.

<http://www.brylanelhome.com/decor/EverGreen-Tree-Watering-System.aspx?Pflid=35631&DeptId=15592&ProductTypeId=1&PurchaseType=0>

- Cats climbing in the tree can be a problem, but some have had success with the [StayAway](#) canister from Contech Electronics that can be purchased at [Amazon.com](#). This product is a battery operated motion detector that senses when a pet is getting too close, then activates a burst of compressed air and a short warning screech. Pets will generally run the other way and hopefully not return. The manufacturer recommends turning this off when toddlers are on the loose.
- Branches that won't hold ornaments can be a problem with some real trees, particularly the long needle, white pine. Try alternating my ornaments by hanging some with fishing twine and some with metal hooks. This allows one ornament to hang on the same strong branch as another, but at different lengths so the branch doesn't appear crowded.
- When Christmas is over, to dispose of the tree, lean it over onto an old sheet or blanket and drag it outside. This will cut down on the number of needles that will need to be vacuumed. Local trash disposal companies will designate a day for disposal of real trees, but you can also chop the wood to cure and burn in a fire-pit. Another option would be making mulch from your tree. If you don't have a chipper/shredder machine, check with your neighbors so see if they have one. You can then use it to turn the tree into mulch for your flower garden in the spring.

For resources on real trees and caring for them, ask anyone working at the tree farm, or you may try the following websites for tips and suggestions.

<http://www.thegardenhelper.com/Christmastree.html>

<http://www.ncagr.com/markets/commodit/horticul/xmastree/care.htm>

http://forestry.about.com/od/christmastrees1/ht/fresh_cut_xmas.htm

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THE YEAR SANTA CLAUS "DIED"

Contributed by Frank Hayden
Saturday, 01 December 2007

I guess I was 10 when Santa Claus died. I sure hated to see that come to pass. I was a bit old to still believe in Santa but there were two good reasons for my sadness at his demise. First, I really enjoyed the feeling inside that Santa and the Christmas season gave me. The second, I'm sorry to say, is a bit more mercenary.

For as long as I believed in Santa, there were two piles of gifts under the tree. The first was unwrapped toys, games, candy, fruits and nuts from Santa. The second was packages wrapped in white tissue paper from Mom and Dad with the necessities of life. You know what I mean: socks, shorts, T-shirts, pants and the like.

That was the first tip off. Santa's toys and games were all tagged with my name in Mom's hand writing. Santa also used Mom's nice bowls for the candy, fruits and nuts. When it was discovered that I knew about dear old Santa, the first pile disappeared and the second grew with more necessities of life.

It took me a few years, but finally from the depths of my soul came floating up the realization that Santa had not died after all. I was 14 and had just started high school. I was walking home from school one fine October afternoon, when it dawned on me that Santa didn't die, he just morphed (I like that word "morphed") into a quiet, gentle, soft warm fuzzy feeling deep inside. I had been thinking about the many Christmas days past and that wonderful feeling came over me.

I could get that wonderful feeling just by watching kids, faces at Christmas time. The excitement and anticipation would just about bubble out all over them. Then when they saw the tree with presents under it, the squeals of pleasure and joy sent the "Morphed Santa" feeling all through my body.

Boy! That made me feel good all over more than any where else. As I got older (around 19 or so), I realized I was having these great feelings just about anytime I wanted, that is except tax time.

The feeling was happening when I smiled at someone and they smiled back. I always hoped that my little smile helped them in some small way. It sure helped me.

When I had children of my own, I had the feeling and it was so powerful and intense it was thrilling. As I grew older and my children grew up, the "Morphed Santa" feeling was diminished.

Guess what! A couple of years down the line I started getting the feeling back a little bit at a time. A smile here, a good laugh there and slowly but surely the feeling was coming back.

The turning point happened one day when I was waiting for my wife in a doctor's office. A lady 45 or 50 years of age walked in and sat down opposite me. She was very disturbed about something and was very deep in somber thought. I watched her for a while and when I was able to catch her eye, I smiled one of my best smiles just for her. She sat there momentarily just blinking at me. I just kept smiling and nodded slightly to her. She gave me one of the prettiest and best smiles I had gotten in sometime. She seemed to relax a little and was much more comfortable. The feeling that Santa morphed into was warming me all inside and it felt good.

I grew older (as people have a way of doing) and the family finances improved as they are wont to do. I received a flyer in the mail from St. Vincent DePaul Society. They were asking for a donation to help the less fortunate. For some reason, my mind flashed on the lady with the pretty smile. No biggie. I wrote them a check and put it in the mail.

By the end of that same week, they had sent me a lovely thank note for my donation. It got me to thinking because that wonderful feeling was back in force. So my wife, Sue, and I sat down and took a look at the budget. The outcome being we put St. Vincent DePaul Society in our budget for every month. We paid our bills twice a month, the first and the 15th of the month. The first had a few heavy bills in it already. You know the car payment, the house payment and all the utilities. So we set them up on the 15th which was lighter. It wasn't long till the Salvation Army joined our list. St. Jude Children's Hospital was next, and then Dare to Care plus a few others joined us.

No one outside the immediate family knows about this, but it has been very gratifying for us. I guess you all know it now, since you are reading my story. I don't mind you knowing, especially if my story kindles a spark in you to pass it on. I think about all the times I have enjoyed that special feeling and I hope you will be inspired to pick up your pen and check book and help give someone a leg up in this hard world. That special feeling is worth it.

PRETTY EASY CHRISTMAS

Written by Marlene Alexander

Monday, 03 December 2007

www.dollarstorestyle.com

What's not to like about Christmas?

Peace on earth, good will towards men and more ways to deck the halls than you can shake a cinnamon stick at. Still, you don't need to spend a lot to dress your home for the holidays. Here are just a few ideas to help you decorate in dollar store style.



You can have a luxurious look this holiday season without the lavish price tag. With the exception of the oblong ornaments, which came in a set of three for a dollar, the wire and fabric baubles shown here were a dollar apiece. Whether you're trimming a tree or filling a bowl, these elegant ornaments rival their pricier counterparts for sparkle and shine. And add a touch of Christmas whimsy to favorite pieces by wrapping them with a bit of ribbon, as we've done by giving this polar bear knick-knack a 'scarf' trimmed with a 3-D sticker.

Here's an easy floral arrangement made up of five Christmas floral picks anchored with river rocks in an attractive bowl. The three large picks were a dollar apiece and the small picks were two for a dollar. This sculptured-look reindeer proves that, even though it's not a Christmas ornament per se, it can still be an elegant addition to your Christmas décor. A candle with a snowflake charm completes this tabletop tableau. The bowl, reindeer, candle and candleholder were

a dollar each.



a dollar each.

Kids young and old will love sitting down to Christmas dinner with these guys. Hang these fun felt pouches on the back of your dining room chairs to help guide guests to their seats and to hold party favors. Small Christmas stockings would work, as well. In this case, we filled our chair decorations with a chocolate treat, a playful Christmas ornament, a 2008 planner and a mechanical pencil. Each goodie bag, with contents, cost about \$3.86. The chocolate was .65 each and the mechanical pencils came in packages of five for a dollar. You can adjust the contents of each chair decoration to suit. We labeled Santa's and Frosty's hat with the names of dinner guests using Christmas-themed self-sticking computer labels that were a dollar per pack.



The most important ingredient to any Christmas is family and friends. So gather yours around you and have your most joyous holiday season ever.

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PERSONAL INJURY: Sorting Out Coverage for Medical Expenses

Contributed by Lisa Greer
Monday, 26 November 2007

Jack and Sara were on their way to a family reunion, when along came a driver from the opposite direction who crossed the center line, clipping their car.

The impact sent the vehicle into a spin, finally coming to rest against a tree on the side of the road. Sara's injuries were minor, but Jack sustained a broken arm and a possible concussion. Most accident victims know at this point the first thing to do is to summons a police officer and an ambulance to the scene. But then what? What are the next steps once Jack gets to the hospital to seek treatment for his injuries?

At the hospital, Sara works with the intake personnel admitting Jack and hands over his medical benefits card. That's okay to do, but what is really needed is Jack's auto insurance information. Medical providers will usually ask for this information when they know the patient has been involved in an auto accident, but it is important for patients to understand why. As an Indiana resident, Jack should have \$5000.00 worth of medical benefits (Med Pay) on his auto policy to cover injuries sustained in an vehicular related accident 100% up to that limit. That is the standard amount, but some policies carry higher Med Pay limits, depending on the type of coverage purchased. It is generally recommended to have \$25,000.00, as five usually isn't enough even in cases with less than severe injuries, especially if physical therapy or chiropractic treatment is necessary.

For the duration of Jack's treatment, his medical providers will bill the Med Pay, and once that benefit is exhausted, medical treatment will then fall under the primary health insurance plan. Five thousand is generally plenty to cover medical expenses unless your injuries are severe and require extensive treatment, surgeries and the like.

If you are a Kentucky resident injured in an auto accident, it works a little different. In the state of Kentucky, Personal Injury Protection (PIP) is required on every policy, and anyone purchasing an auto policy that does not want PIP must specifically waive it in writing.

With PIP, an injured party generally has a limit up to \$10,000.00 that can be used for medical expenses from injuries sustained in an auto accident, but this benefit may also be used to claim lost wages. In other words, if you miss work because of your injuries, and your employer deducts money from your pay as a result of those days missed, you may file a claim through your PIP to be compensated for those lost wages.

Indiana does not have the lost wage option, however if you are an Indiana resident injured in an auto accident in Kentucky, you will want to check with your insurance company to see if they do business in that state. If so, you may have PIP benefits available to you that can be used instead of your Med Pay.

Just as important as knowing your medical coverage, it's good to know what your auto coverage means. Most understand how the property damage works that covers the vehicle, but what if you are the at fault driver, and you have injured another person in that accident? Or, what if an at fault driver injures you, but doesn't have insurance coverage? It would be a good idea to discuss this with your insurance agent up front, so you'll know if you have adequate coverage for most situations.

Note: Information contained in this section is a reprint from The Capitol News and has been approved by the law firm of Kaufman Stigger and Hughes 866-444-4KSH (4574), www.ksh-law.com. If you are having problems with a personal injury claim, you may want to seek the assistance of an attorney to resolve your claim.

MAKING YOUR OWN CHRISTMAS GIFTS



Written by Contribution by Marsha Gilley

Saturday, 01 December 2007

Articles abound this time of year for tips on not going over budget on Christmas gifts. But, many of us still do it because we tend to forget factoring in gift exchanges with co-workers, or members of groups or clubs we belong to.

Our choices are limited and many times we end up getting –and receiving –little trinkets that no one ever uses again. I actually did find a use for some of these by sprucing up my window sills at home with groupings of these items received over the years. Before discarding these items, look around and see if there isn't a nook or cranny in your home that could use a little festive décor.

For those who wish to give a gift that is meaningful, nothing depicts a gift given from the heart like something homemade. For this issue, Marsha Gilley has provided us with a website that is a plethora of free craft pattern ideas for the holidays – www.about.com. In particular, she pointed to something that is a great gift idea and we have this featured below:

Here is the link to the pattern for some neat cell phone cases: <http://sewing.about.com/od/freeprojects/ss/cellphonecases.htm>



We didn't stop there, though. Once you start browsing About.com, you'll see there's a plethora of information, as well as free patterns for crafts of all kinds. Here's a cool wreath: <http://sewing.about.com/od/christmasideas/ss/fabricwreath.htm>



To find other handmade gift ideas, try this link to 101 of them.

<http://holidays.about.com/od/craftsactivities/a/120400a.htm>

If you're looking for some unique items, we also found this blog with free crochet patters from The Crochet Dude

<http://thecrochetdudepatterns.blogspot.com/>

From Sensible Life Magazine, we wish you a very economical holiday season.

Merry Christmas!

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DEFEATING HUNGER THROUGH THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

Contributed by Lisa Greer
Monday, 26 November 2007

With 800 million chronically hungry people in the world, how can world hunger ever be defeated?

There are many myths associated with why this situation exists in the world today, but the truth is, hunger can happen to any one of us at any time. All it would take is one major disaster, and we could end up without a home, or any resources for nourishment.

Fortunately, one organization addresses the hunger battle on a daily basis worldwide, and that is the World Food Programme (<http://www.wfp.org/english/>). WFP runs emergency and development projects in 78 countries worldwide, providing food and resources to disaster ridden and war torn areas, as well as providing the hunger victims the means to build self-sustaining communities in the most impoverished and disadvantaged corners of the world. In 2006 alone, WFP reached 87.8 million people in the categories they serve, which include: Emergencies, Relief & Rehabilitation, Development, and Special Operations.

Whatever the situation, WFP is often the first response. In 2006 they provided 63.4 million disaster victims with nourishment by way of air, land and sea. Once at its destination, WFP teams up with governments and other organizations to distribute food into the hands and mouths of the hungry.

As soon as disaster hits, WFP's Emergency Assessment teams gather the necessary information, such as how much food, how many people, and for what length of time. They then draw up an Emergency Operation Plan (EMOP) which includes a plan of action and budget. It's no easy task to get food through a crisis zone, so method of transportation and delivery are essential. Food has been distributed by many unconventional methods, including by camel and mule.

Typical products consist of basic food items such as cereals, oils, grains, legumes, and sometimes meats, vegetables and fruit. In early stages of emergencies, when basic cooking facilities are in short supply, WFP uses high energy biscuits, rich in micro-nutrients, to meet food needs. Whatever the need, you can be assured that the World Food Programme will put a plan in place to meet it.

WFP not only responds to disaster, but they have implemented programs designed to break the cycle of hunger. For example, in war-torn countries, they offer food aid as an incentive for ex-combatants to abandon weapons and learn new skills, which are vital to smooth their path back to society. WFP has Food for Work projects that pay the hungry with food for the work they perform.

Other programs include plans to promote education by easing the burden of a child's focus on acquiring nourishment. For a hungry child, it's hard to concentrate on lessons. Hunger drains them of their will and ability to learn, and for a hungry child, having enough food to eat is more important than going to school. For a hungry family, children are an extra pair of hands in the fields or at home, so school is considered a luxury.

Every year of missed schooling during childhood cuts deeply into lifetime earnings, so the long-term costs of reduced school attendance, not only to the children themselves, but also to the prosperity of the nations in which they live have a significant and adverse impact.

For the hungry, every day is about finding enough food to survive: farmers cannot afford to risk trying new agricultural methods, when they can barely subsist on a small patch of land; the unemployed never have a chance to learn new skills if they spend all day scraping and making a living on the black market; and poverty-stricken communities hit by floods or droughts are too busy looking for food to rebuild infrastructure vital for redevelopment.

To add the promise of at least one nutritious meal each day results in increased enrollment in schools as well as improved attendance and enhanced student performance. Even in the poorest areas of the world, this simple strategy can as much as double primary school enrollment in one year.

In 2000, WFP launched a global school feeding campaign, encouraging governments and international agencies throughout the world to put in place school feeding programs that would provide nutritious food to all children in need.

What started out as providing one basic meal to school age children, became the forefront of the battle against hunger. Of the 400 million children in the world who are chronically hungry, about 100 million of them do not attend school, and two thirds of those are girls. WFP's formula is that food attracts hungry children to school, and in turn, education broadens their options to escape poverty. These children face tremendous odds, and one school meal can make all the difference in the world.

WFP's school feeding programs are geared toward several goals, which include reducing hunger by half and achieving universal primary education, with an equivalent number of girls, by the year 2015. Through school-based

interventions makeshift schools can be transformed into safe places where children can receive basic education, food, health and nutrition.

The progress and success of these school feeding programs have been phenomenal. In 1999, there were 11.9 million children in 52 countries who were beneficiaries of WFP school feeding activities, and by 2005, that number increased to 21.7 million in 72 countries who were recipients of school meals. Since 2001, the United States has been the largest single donor to WFP school feeding activities, providing proof that your donations and your efforts really do make a difference.

With this being the season for giving, Sensible Life wanted to provide you with an example from the World Food Programme of how your dollars can help:

Giving just \$1 (US) can help five people avoid starvation.

\$10 can feed a hungry person for a month

\$34 can feed a child in school for the entire academic year

\$100 can feed a class of 25 students for a month

\$500 can build a school garden, supplying children with fresh, nutritious produce

\$1000 can provide emergency rations to nearly 2,000 people

If you are interested in giving to this organization, visit the website provided above and find out how you can help both locally and globally.

COOKIES FOR CHRISTMAS

Contributed by Lisa Greer
Monday, 26 November 2007

'Tis the season for cookie baking, and Sensible Life would like to wish you a Merry Christmas with recipes for some yummy treats.

Amish Sugar Cookies

1 cup sugar
1 cup powdered sugar
1 cup butter or margarine
1 cup cooking oil
2 eggs
4 1/2 cups flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon cream of tartar
1 teaspoon vanilla

Combine sugars, butter and oil, beat well. Add eggs and mix well. Add flour, baking powder, baking soda, cream of tartar and vanilla. Cover with plastic wrap and put in the refrigerator overnight. Make into small balls and flatten slightly with a fork. Bake at 375 degrees for 10-12 minutes. Be sure not to over cook.

Haystacks

2 (12 ounce) packages Semi-sweet choc chips
1 (12ounce) package butterscotch chips
1 large can Chow Mein Noodles
Spanish peanuts, marshmallows, cashews, etc..

Melt all the chips together in a large pan over low heat, stirring constantly. Add noodles and stir to coat. Add whatever else you may desire, stirring to coat. Place on wax paper by spoonful and cool until set.

Christmas Ginger Snaps

1/2 cup shortening
1 cup sugar
1 egg
1/3 cup molasses
2 cups flour
2 teaspoons baking soda
2 teaspoons ginger
1 teaspoon cinnamon

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Put shortening and sugar in a large bowl. Beat well. Add eggs and molasses and beat until light. Stir flour, baking soda, ginger and cinnamon. Roll pieces of dough into small balls. Place into a greased cookie sheet. Sprinkle the tops with a little white sugar. Bake 12-14 minutes.

Christmas Shaped Cookies

1 cup of shortening
3/4 cup of sugar
2 1/4 cups of sifted all-purpose flour
1 egg
1 teaspoon of almond extract
1/4 teaspoon of baking powder
1/4 teaspoon of salt
Food coloring

Cream shortening and sugar together. Mix in the egg and almond extract. Blend in the dry ingredients and tint with red or

green food coloring. Form cookies into Christmas trees, wreathes, etc. using a cookie press on an ungreased cookie sheet. Decorate with cinnamon balls or multicolored sprinkles. Bake 10 to 12 minutes at 375 degrees. Place immediately on a cooling rack.

Double Chocolate Chip Cookies

1 1/4 cup butter or margarine, softened
2 cups sugar
2 eggs
2 tsp vanilla
2 cups unsifted all purpose flour
3/4 cup cocoa
1 tsp baking soda
1/2 tsp salt
2 cups chocolate chips

Cream butter or margarine and sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs and vanilla. Beat well. Combine flour, cocoa, baking soda and salt. Blend into creamed mixture. Stir in chips. Drop by teaspoonfuls onto ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 350 for 8-9 minutes. (do not over bake or cookies will be soft.) Cool slightly and remove from cookie sheet.

Cornflake Christmas Wreath Cookies

1/2 cup margarine
1 package (10oz) regular marshmallows
1 teaspoon green food coloring
6 cups Corn Flakes cereal
red cinnamon candies
vegetable cooking spray

In a large saucepan, melt margarine over low heat. Add marshmallows and stir until completely melted. Remove from heat. Stir in food coloring. Add corn flakes cereal. Stir until well coated. Using 1/4 cup dry measure coated with cooking spray, evenly portion warm cereal mixture. Using buttered fingers, quickly shape into individual wreaths. Dot with cinnamon candies. Makes 16 wreaths Or 1-2 large wreaths

Gingerbread Men

1 cup butter
1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon ground cloves
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/2 cup molasses
1 teaspoon vinegar
2 eggs, beaten
5 cups flour, sifted
1 teaspoon soda

Mix sugar, butter, spices and molasses. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Cool to lukewarm. Add vinegar and eggs. Mix well. Add sifted flour and soda blending to a smooth dough. Chill. Roll out on floured board and cut with a 4 or 6 inch cookie cutter. Bake on an ungreased cookie sheet at 350 degrees for 10 minutes.

Date Nut Balls

1/2 cup margarine or butter
1 cup sugar
1 egg
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 (8 ounce) package of chopped dates

1 cup chopped nuts
 2 1/2 cup Rice Krispies
 coconut

Melt butter in large saucepan. Add vanilla, sugar, egg, and dates and simmer over medium heat until thick. Remove from heat. Mix nuts and Rice Krispies. Allow to cool until mixture can be handled. Grease hands and form into small balls. Roll balls into coconut.

Lemon Squares

1 cup flour
 1/2 cup butter
 1/4 cup powdered sugar
 2 eggs
 1 cup granulated sugar
 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
 2 1/2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
 dash of salt

Blend flour, butter and powdered sugar with fingertips until well mixed. Pat evenly into the bottom of an 8x8 inch baking pan. Bake for 20 minutes at 350 degrees. Meanwhile beat together: eggs, granulated sugar, baking powder, fresh lemon juice and a dash of salt. Pour over baked crust and return to oven for 20-25 minutes at same temperature. Cool on rack. Cut into squares. Sprinkle with soft powdered sugar.

Peppermint Snowballs

3 cups powdered sugar - DIVIDED
 1 1/4 cup butter or margarine (softened)
 1 teaspoon peppermint extract
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 1 egg
 3 cups all-purpose flour
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1 cup finely crushed peppermint candy - DIVIDED
 as needed granulated sugar
 2-3 tablespoons skim milk
 1 teaspoon baking powder

Heat oven to 350 degrees. In large mixer bowl, combine the 1 1/2 powdered sugar, butter or margarine, peppermint extract, vanilla and egg. Beat at medium speed, scraping bowl often until creamy (2-3 minutes). Reduce speed to low. Add flour, baking powder and salt; Beat, scraping bowl often until well blended (1-2 minutes). By hand, stir in 1/2 cup candy. Shape dough into 3/4 inch balls; roll in granulated sugar. Place 1 inch apart on cookie sheet. Bake for 10-12 minutes or until set. Cool completely. GLAZE... In small mixer bowl combine 1 1/2 powdered sugar and enough milk for desired glazing consistency. Drizzle cooled cookies with glaze. Immediately sprinkle with the remaining peppermint candy. Makes 5 dozen.

Rich Flavor Christmas Cookies

1 cup butter
 1/2 cup sugar
 1 egg, unbeaten
 2 teaspoon vanilla
 3 cups sifted flour
 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
 1/8 teaspoon salt

Cream butter and sugar thoroughly. Add egg and vanilla. Mix well. Gradually stir in sifted dry ingredients until well blended. Chill if needed to make easier to handle. Roll small amounts of dough 1/8-inch thick on a floured board. Shape with cookie cutters as desired. Bake on ungreased cookie sheet at 350 degrees about 10 to 12 minutes or until delicately browned.

Santa Claus Cookies

1 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup shortening
2 Tablespoons milk
1 teaspoon grated lemon peel
1 egg
1 teaspoon baking powder
2 cups flour
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 can instant frosting
miniature marshmallows
semi-sweet chocolate chips
red cinnamon candies
red sugar
shredded coconut

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Lightly grease cookie sheet. Mix granulated sugar, shortening, milk, lemon peel and egg into large bowl. Stir in flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Shape dough into 1 1/4 inch balls. Place about 2 inches apart on cookie sheet flatten each about 2 1/2 inches in diameter with greased bottom of a glass dipped in sugar. Bake until edges are light brown, 8-10 minutes. Cool. Spread cookie with small amount of frosting. Press on mini marshmallows for a tassel of cap. Sprinkle top 1/3 of cookie with red sugar. Press 2 chocolate chips for eyes and red cinnamon candy for nose into center of cookie. Sprinkle bottom 1/3 with coconut for bread. Frost and decorate each cookie before starting the next. Makes 1 and 1/2 dozen cookies.

CHRISTMAS SAFETY TIPS



Written by Rexinto the Dino with Sandy Cable

Saturday, 01 December 2007

Well everyone, it's that time of year again, and I'm going home for the holidays. It's time to go shopping for friends and family, decorate the Christmas tree, and put milk and cookies out for Santa.



Christmas is one of my favorite holidays, not only because of all the good feelings, but because we celebrate the birth of Jesus by spending time with those we care about most in the whole world. But among all the holiday festivities, we must remember to practice safety so that everyone stays out of danger.

Here are a few helpful things to keep in mind this year:

What to do to keep pets safe

If you have dogs, try to keep lights and ornaments around the top of the tree so the little guys can't eat them... and yes, they will eat them. You can also try surrounding the tree with a decorative gate or spraying the whole thing with a no-chew spray that can be purchased from any local pet store.

- If you have a cat, beware their need to climb. Try blocking off the tree or putting up a distraction, such as tying a bunch of ribbon to a door knob.

- Don't buy a pet as a Christmas present unless the whole family has approved the responsibility. Adoptions go up this time of year, and then many are returned in the following months because the people who received them don't want them, don't want the responsibility, or just plain don't have the time.
- Make sure to always keep an eye on your pets around the Christmas decorations so that they don't eat something harmful. Remember, prevention is the best action. If they keep getting something, remove the distraction by taking it to another room or down all together. To your pets, these aren't Christmas decorations but new and wonderful things that have come into their space for their amusement.
- Keep candles away from tail wagging or climbing distance so that they won't get knocked over and accidentally start a fire.

Keeping your home safe

- If your family, like mine, likes to buy real trees, make sure the tree you get is fresh and green and not dry and brown.
- Check the water level in the tree stand every other day to make sure it doesn't dry up. If it dries up, the tree will become a fire hazard. A typical 6ft tree will soak up a gallon of water every other day.
- If you are buying a fake tree, make sure the tag says fire resistant so that in the case of an emergency, it can be put out easily.
- When plugging in lights, don't overload the electrical outlet with plugs because this too can be a fire hazard.
- When you decorate the tree, candles may seem pretty in the movies, but decorating with candy canes will work just as well, and be much safer.
- If you and grandma decide to bake a batch of Christmas cookies, make sure you let an adult handle the hot pans and work the oven, and always check that the oven is off when you're done.
- Remember to put out all candles and the fireplace before going to bed so that there is no chance of an accident occurring from stray flames.

Being safe outdoors

- When you go play in the snow, make sure your cloths and gloves are dry. If they get too wet, it's time to go inside or change into a new pair.
- If you decide to race your friends down a snow covered hill, never try to sled on one with a street or road at the bottom.
- If you are helping put up outdoor lights, keep all extension cords out of puddles or where they will stay wet, and never use indoor extension cords outside.

Following these simple guidelines will ensure a safe and happy holiday season for you and your family. After the hustle and bustle, I'd love to hear some of your great holiday memories from this year. E-mail me at rexinto@sensiblelife.com, or check out my MySpace at <http://www.myspace.com/rexinto> and tell me one great thing that you did. You may even see your story featured in the next issue of Sensible Life. Just remember to be safe, be careful, and be responsible.

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CHRISTMAS POETRY

Contributed by Funmuch
Sunday, 02 December 2007

Sensible Life has looked around for some neat poems to read to loved ones at Christmas, and we found a terrific website called Funmuch containing poems like the one below.

Visit Funmuch today to prepare for your holiday festivities.

THE STOCKINGS ARE HUNG

The stockings are hung,
the carols are being sung.
My heart is filled with joy,
along with every girl and boy.
It's really hard to go to sleep,
you want to go and take a peep.
And, when you're finally in bed,
visions of Santa dance in your head.

You wake up at eight,
it's already late!
You wake up your Mom and Dad,
they are never as glad.
Once you're all awake,
you eat some coffee cake.
You run down to the tree,
you cannot believe what you see.

Your stockings are overflowing,
everyone's face is glowing.
You must open family presents first,
you're so excited you just might burst.
Then Santa's are the next to go,
you tear off the wrapping and the bow.
You rip them open one by one,
seeing toy after toy, each filled with fun.

And after about an hour,
your face begins to turn sour.
There's nothing left under the tree,
you have very little glee.
But, then a car pulls in,
with presents wrapped in tin.
Your cousins are here,
bearing more Christmas cheer.

There is then, many holiday greetings,
more and more joyful meetings.
The present opening order shifts,
and you begin to open more gifts.
And when the good-byes have been said,
it's time to shower and make your bed.

Once everyone is out,
there is no reason to pout.
You pile into your car,
you don't have to travel very far.
You're off to another family meeting,
you're welcomed with a warm greeting.
You eat an excellent dinner,
the fire is keeping you from the wind of winter.

You open some more toys,
with your cousins, girl and boys.

Once your thank-yous have been said,
you are definitely ready for bed.
You tell everyone good-night,
and your heart becomes light.
And while in bed,
the day dances in your head.
You thank the Lord for today,
while you slowly drift away.

WINTER BLUES THERAPY IN CRAWFORD COUNTY INDIANA



Written by Gracie Dane

Saturday, 01 December 2007

'Tis the season for sharing, caring and giving, but once Christmas has come and gone, but if you're not careful winter blues can creep in.

To alleviate that feeling, try getting away for a weekend to relax and rejuvenate. Your best bet for relaxation is a small, quaint area away from the bustle of every day life, and Crawford County Indiana could be just the place for you. Imagine no schedules or traffic jams, but rather easing into the day sipping fresh brewed coffee in your room at the Leavenworth Inn as you watch barges meander round the horseshoe bend of the Ohio River.

In the warmer seasons, activities abound in the area -antiquing, spelunking in two beautiful, nationally acclaimed caves, and visiting the legendary shoe tree where, over the years, newlyweds have tossed pairs of old shoes for good luck. Maybe you'd simply like to relax and mingle with the locals, listening to history rich stories. You're guaranteed to feel right at home -after all, Leavenworth Indiana isn't just a place to visit; it's a place where everyone knows everyone else's name, and they want to know yours as well.



Staying at the Leavenworth Inn takes you back to an unpretentious time when life moved at a much slower pace. Built in the late 1800's by W.J. Sacksteder, this bed and breakfast started out as a retreat known as Forest Grove Farm. Guest. Then, guests were promised fresh milk from Jersey cows, pure water, vegetables from the garden and splendid scenery. Today, there may not be fresh milk, but the scenery is still superb.



Here, nostalgia at its finest, but with all the comforts of modern conveniences. Directly across from the Overlook Restaurant and situated on six lovely acres that includes a tennis court, gardens with a gazebo, walking and bicycle paths,

your stage for fun and relaxation is set. For those cold winter days, curl up in the Library by the fire and enjoy a good novel, or even just play some board games with a loved one. When venturing out into the town, be sure to visit Stephenson's General Store. Old meets new in the variety of items sold there -you can even make your own buttons from mussel shells, and pick out some beautiful hues of marbles as you munch on old fashioned stick candy.

Even if you're not looking for a weekend stay, the Leavenworth Inn is the perfect setting for weddings and receptions, private parties, business meetings, church retreats, and family or class reunions. Contact the facility about rates, or reserving the reception and meeting hall for your event by visiting www.leavenworthinn.com. Be sure to ask about special packages throughout the year, including options such as a winter hiking excursion through the area's local woodlands, and River of the Stars weekend where guests visit the Louisville Astronomical Society's observatory where Saturn and the Quarter Moon float on a river of stars.

Other activities in the area include:



Horseback riding

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<http://www.triplejranchtrailrides.com/>

Golfing - <http://www.oldcapitalgolf.com>

Caving - <http://www.marengocave.com/> and <http://www.wyandotecaves.com/>

Crawford County - <http://www.crawfordcountyindiana.com/>

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