

## Gift trends focus on meaning, affordability

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

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Despite thinning wallets, the holiday gift list doesn't need to be a source of panic. Experts insist one can give meaningful gifts, even on a limited budget.

“In these tough economic times, shoppers can protect their gift investments by focusing on gifts with special significance for both the giver and recipient,” says Amy Myers, vice president of creative services for Things Remembered, a nationwide personalized gift retailer. “Gifts with special meaning will be used and remembered long after the holiday ends, and there are countless budget-minded gifts that make a lasting statement.”

This season gifts are trending toward affordable presents that convey personal messages:

—Gifts celebrating family: Holidays traditionally are about spending time with family. With more Americans spending time at home, family has become even more important. This season, retailers are offering gifts that celebrate and showcase loved ones—from contemporary jewelry that incorporates children's birthstones to photo albums that highlight family lineage and even photo bookmarks building in pictures of the kids.

—Personal gifts: In tough economic times, shoppers want to ensure each gift they give is used and remembered for years to come. With this in mind, personalized gifts are expected to be among the season's best sellers.

—Gifts that give back: Money may be tight, but consumers still want to support charitable organizations. For those who can't fit a monetary donation into holiday budgets, gifts donating a portion of their proceeds provide another means of support. Many companies offer gifts that benefit important causes.

—Non-toy gifts: Most kids have enough toys. This year, select gifts children will hold dear for a lifetime. Gifts like engraved water globes or personalized, embroidered blankets can be enjoyed this season and passed to future generations. Children often don't remember who got them which toy, but they'll remember these sentimental gifts for a lifetime.

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Gifts for the home: Whether given as hostess gifts or shared over holiday dinners with extended family, home-oriented holiday gifts will again ring popular.

“Home-focused gifts will be more popular than ever before because shoppers recognize they will be used and appreciated this season and for many years to come,” says Myers. “Plus, many home-oriented gifts add value with customizable options or decorative packaging that eliminates the need for budget-draining wrapping paper or gift bags.”

To outfit the house in seasonal style and put a personalized touch on entertaining, retailers have introduced a variety of home gifts that offer room to engrave names, dates, holiday memories and other special reflections. Such home adornments even include smaller keepsakes, such as engravable photo stocking holders, embroidered stockings or adorable snowman-themed water globes.