

Holiday Cheer for the Family

By Margie Ryerson

There's a reason that we watch the same videos year after year during the holiday season. "It's a Wonderful Life," "A Christmas Story," and "Miracle on 34th Street" are some of the most popular holiday films. They portray a simpler time when life was slower-paced, less consumer-oriented, and "stress" wasn't a well-known word.

These days, families often try to pack in lots of activities in an attempt to create holiday cheer and memories. We want to live life to the fullest, and sometimes this means living life to the most frenetic. If your calendar becomes too crowded and you are rushing from one activity to another, it is hard to savor the experiences you are having. Limiting your holiday socializing can prevent your schedule from becoming too hectic and can allow time for meaningful family activities.

Children usually long for traditions, and many can be quite simple. Asking your children what their favorite family activities are, before the holidays are upon us, allows you to

pick some that are easy to implement. One friend of Italian heritage has prepared homemade raviolis with her children each Christmas. This tradition was always her children's favorite, and still is, even though they are now in their 20's.

Gift-giving has changed radically from simpler times. Where each child may have received six or seven gifts for Christmas or one gift for each night of Chanukah, nowadays it can take hours to open all of the gifts. Children may not appreciate what they receive if they are inundated with presents.

As parents, you can agree upon how many gifts each child will receive, how expensive the total will be for each child, and what you will do together to create a memorable holiday season. You can decide to produce simple gifts for friends and relatives as a family, volunteer together for some of the many worthwhile charities in the Bay area, or even create a "do-it-yourself" volunteer project.

One family took the initiative and asked their local



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Safeway store if it would donate some of its unsold Christmas trees and decorations the day before Christmas. When they got the okay, they contacted a shelter in Oakland and arranged to deliver trees, ornaments, and gifts they purchased and wrapped. The parents said they enjoyed showing their children how even a simple volunteer effort could effectively bring joy to others.

Here's to a happy, healthy, and simple holiday season for all!

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