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Lynn's Top Five Creating Family Memories and Charitable Giving: The Perfect Holiday Recipe

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parties she might otherwise not go to just to be able to bring a donation hostess gift!

4) Take your grandkids (or children!) shopping for a Toys for Tots present. This always puts a smile on my face. I loved doing this with my family, and it was so great to see my kids learn to buy something for someone less fortunate than themselves. This is especially meaningful for grandparents to do with their grandchildren. So, after they sit in Santa's lap or you hit the movie theater, take your children or grandchildren to a toy store and pick up some gifts for less fortunate kids. Then deliver them to the fire station or other drop-off location with your children or grandchildren. This doesn't have to be expensive! Give them a budget and let them enjoy shopping for someone in need. They'll remember for years both spending this great time with you and how good it made them feel to do something for someone else.

5) Clean out the house and give it away! Make it a scavenger hunt in reverse: challenge each family member to find three things they never use that someone else might enjoy. It could be the obvious clothing or toys, or it could be dishes you don't use anymore or even excess office supplies! Books and magazines can be donated to our libraries while other goods can be given to our local Goodwill, Salvation Army and drop boxes at some local churches. Less clutter and a memorable charitable family event? A win-win!

Wishing you all a memorable, charitable and meaningful holiday season! Cheers!

At this time of year we are all looking for ways to spend time with friends and families and celebrate the holidays without taking our budgets to the brink. Folks in our community are particularly charitably minded, so I really think this column will resonate well with all of you. In fact, I wish you were here with me as I'm writing this, because I bet you have a whole bunch of other great ideas I didn't list!

But just to get the conversation and creative juices going, here are five ideas for how to spend quality time with your loved ones, add value to things that matter to you at this time of year, create a lifetime of wonderful memories, and, oh yeah - not break the piggy bank!

1) Give to someone's favorite charity in their name. My brother and I had been sending each other assorted muffins, cheeses and the like for years. By the time we were done with the packaging, the shipping and the sales tax, we'd each spent a lot of money for a little gift. Finally we said "enough!" Now what we do has so much more meaning to us both: we gift to our favorite charities during the holidays in each other's honor. It took us both being brave enough to be the one to say, hey, do you really want another cheese roll this year? Or can I find a better way to honor you? My brother, despite being the "foodie" that he is, immediately embraced the charitable gifting idea, leaving me to wonder, what took me so long to ask him?

2) Volunteer together. For those of you blessed to live close to family, I personally love this idea. Working together on behalf of your favorite organization builds a lifetime of memories and really leaves a lasting legacy. Whether it's volunteering to serve a meal at a shelter, or singing carols at a nursing home, you'll never forget the event and the time you spent together, all the while doing something truly wonderful for someone else.

3) Collect coats or canned goods at your party. Another personal favorite, I love being invited to someone's home with the "hostess gift" being a donation for a worthy cause. From coats, to canned goods, to spare change in your pocket, many great ideas resonate well with your guests. One friend tells me that she often says "yes" to

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