

# Creative Splatters and Simple Gifts:

## How to Feel the Holiday Spirit without Spending a Penny

Half-a-Dozen Ideas  
by Marney Makridakis

1. **Go to the library and check out children's books about the Holidays.** My mother has a children's library in her home, which you can read about at <http://www.ArtellaWordsAndArt.com/LittleLibrary.html>. When I visit her for the holidays, I love discovering multiple layers in the joy of the Season by reading children's books. There are wonderful books that celebrate the diverse traditions, cultures, and themes of this Season, while being inspiring, entertaining, informative, and fantastic waltzes of words and art! Read the books out loud with a friend of any age, or curl up and enjoy a romp through our world's many celebrations. A few of the favorites I have discovered, that I recommend for inspiring themes, writing, and art, are:

- *Children Around the World Celebrate Christmas* by Susan Titus Osborn and Christine Tangvald
- *Light the Candles: a Hanukkah Lift-the-Flap Book* by Joan Holub, illustrations by Lynne Cravath
- *The Greatest Gift of All* by Kimberly Rhinehart, illustrations by Georgia Rettmer
- *A Kwanzaa Celebration Pop Up Book* by Nancy Williams, illustrations by Robert Sabuda
- *Peter Spier's Christmas!* by Peter Spier
- *A Small Miracle* by Peter Collington
- *Light the Candle! Bang the Drum!: A Book of Holidays* by Ann Morris

2. **Make a wishing tree.** Take a small, interestingly-shaped branch and steady it in a bowl (try putting it in floral Styrofoam, or balancing it amidst rocks, pebbles, or sand. Or simply wrap clear tape around the branch's base and tape supports around it to keep it standing upright – remember, the point here is that you don't have to spend any money.) Once your "tree" is planted, add wishes to the small branches by adding simple "ornaments", accompanying each one with a wish. Have fun playing with wishes for yourself, loved ones, and for the world. The wishing tree is a ritual that you can do alone, or with your family or friends. Here are some ideas for the "ornaments":

- little notes stuck on branches
- earrings or other jewelry hung over branches
- fibers or yarn or ribbon tied in bows around the little branches
- gumdrops stuck on the twigs (a favorite tradition from my childhood)

3. **Go on a virtual window shopping trip with an Internet friend.** Make a "shopping date" that you can do from your own computers, in your own corners of the world. Hook up to an Instant

Message program (both MSN and AOL have ones that are free to anyone) and sign on so that you can "chat" back and forth in real time. While you are chatting, each of you surf the internet for fun finds, and then pass the links back and forth. Some ideas:

- Allow serendipity to take over and enter interesting words in search engines, or as URLs, and see what you find. For example, when I looked up "Marney" in a search engine, I learned about a Medieval English village named Marney, and found this sentence: "Marney was the energetic center of town where villagers connected to socialize and engage in bartering and exchanges." Wow!!!
- Go to Artella's **Smart Shopper** ([http://www.artellaland.com/shop/index.php?main\\_page=page\\_2](http://www.artellaland.com/shop/index.php?main_page=page_2)) and each of you answer the questions for the other person. Then share which gift choices you came up with by sending the links of the gifts you are "giving" the person "in thought". Giving gifts on an energetic level puts into action the idea that "it's the thought that counts". Knowing what someone would give you, if resources were not an issue, is a fabulous thing to take in and accept.

I'll warn you that giving "energetic gifts" is a very powerful activity. A few years ago, during a lean holiday season, my husband and I exchanged our "would-be gifts" in a tender exchange. I "gave" him a PalmPilot, and he "gave" me aquamarine earrings, to match the stone in my engagement rings. It was such a sweet gift exchange that didn't involve any tangible goods, or any money.

But...guess what happened within a week? He came home one night announcing that one of his customers gave him a Palm Pilot as a Christmas gift. And my friend, jewelry artist Melissa Chapin ([artellaland.com/shop/index.php?main\\_page=page&id=16](http://www.artellaland.com/shop/index.php?main_page=page&id=16)) gave me aquamarine earrings! Tony and I were pretty impressed that we were able to manifest these gifts for one another, and for me, this was a turning point in my own understanding of how the Universe responds to the desires we verbalize.

4. **It's a wonderful life!** Take inspiration from the theme of the great holiday movie, *It's a Wonderful Life*, and tell someone that YOUR life is different because of them. We are graced daily by the small, seemingly insignificant actions of other people, and too many people are walking around not realizing that they made a difference. Send an eCard (take a look at Artella's eCards at [www.artellawordsandart.com/free-ecards.html](http://www.artellawordsandart.com/free-ecards.html)) to thank someone for something they have done in 2004 that made a difference to you.

5. **Create a "virtual gift basket" via a PDF file.** If you can put together a Word document, you can make a virtual gift basket! Collect meaningful items and type/paste them into a Word document, such as: quotes from emails between you and your friend, inspiring quotes, links to inspirational sites, neat graphics, etc. Put it all together in a Word file, adding headings and sub-headings to personalize it for the recipient. Then go to <http://www.pdf995.com/> to download a free utility that will allow you to create a PDF file from the Word document by installing a "printer" to your machine called PDF995. You can create a PDF file by simply selecting PDF995 when you print a document. Once you make a PDF, you can save it, and then you can email it to your friend as an attachment. A perfectly personalized passionate gift!

6. **Make and give "Play Money!"** At the Artella Retreat in 2004, we exchanged "play money" all weekend: money that each participant made before and during the to give in appreciation for meaningful exchanges. The play money ranged from seashells, to tiny quilts, to watercolor expressions, to "chicken bill" drawings, to Artella bucks with the giver's dream written on the back. When people ran out of money, they could go to the Art Room and make more. It was wonderful! You can do it, too...give someone a gift of money you design yourself, and send it to them with a note explaining this sincere gift of prosperity and abundance.

