

Give Back to Your Community this Holiday Season

Written by CNU-Carolinas Chapter
Wednesday, 07 December 2011 12:42

This holiday season, in a time when our towns, cities and country, as well as our own wallets, are in a tough economic condition, a couple of adages come to mind: "It is better to give than to receive," or as JFK so eloquently put it in fifty years ago, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." What do these ideas, especially the latter, have to do with the holiday season? Believe it or not, these two thoughts can be interrelated when you begin to plan your holiday shopping, parties, gifts and decorating. While you're thinking about others and how to give them just the right gift or card to bring them joy this season, consider also making decisions that have an equally positive impact on your community.

1) Shop Locally, Shop Locally, Shop Locally!

The second annual Small Business Saturday was held on November 26, the Saturday after Thanksgiving. This national movement to remind shoppers about the great items they can buy in their own town does not have to be limited to that one day. The towns of Beaufort, Bluffton and Hilton Head are full of locally owned shops with unique, one-of-a-kind gifts. Savannah and Charleston are a short drive away for expanded variety. According to a variety of studies, between 65-75% of money spent locally stays in the local economy.

Gifts are not the only thing that can be purchased from small businesses this holiday season. Consider the food you prepare and serve at your holiday party or gathering. Beaufort has some great resources to procure locally grown and produced food, including five Farmers Markets open in December (some even year round), Sea Islands Local Outlet (silo-beaufort.com), Lowcountry Produce and BareFoot Farms. If you are not as inclined to prepare the food yourself, consider contacting a local restaurant or caterer and have them help you. A few restaurateurs in the area go out of their way to use fresh, seasonal and local produce so that's even better!

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These small businesses form the backbone of our communities and give towns unique identities. They are the software, of sorts, which fill the buildings of our city and generate tax revenue, jobs, and liveliness, which we all benefit from.

2) ☐☐☐ Give a Gift... to the Street!

Many of us enjoy driving around town after dark during the holidays to see all of the beautiful lights, decorations and yard displays put up by our neighbors. For one month every year, a majority of people gives this gift of festivity and decoration to their street, enlivening their neighborhoods and making them more interesting and beautiful to travel. Consider a gift to the street that can last all year round, something you can incorporate into your holiday decorating, but leave up for lasting enjoyment. This can be substantial, such as a bench, arbor, light, or fountain, or a small item such as flowers, a vegetable bed or potted seasonal garden, or a wreath. Think about how much you enjoy walking around on a cool winter evening admiring your neighbor's décor and imagine experiencing that year round!

3) ☐☐☐ Participate!

The holidays are marked by events – parties, workplace events, and public events. Beaufort County has a number of holiday festivities for everyone to enjoy. The first weekend of December, downtown Beaufort hosts the Holiday Weekend full of fun events for the whole family. That same weekend, historic Bluffton does their Christmas walk, and on December 9th, Hilton Head hosts its Winter Wonder Festival. Habersham Marketplace also hosts a special Christmas Craft markets during their weekly Friday Farmers Markets in December. These events enliven our communities and are not successful without the key ingredients – people! So come out, mingle with your neighbors and enjoy the festivities this holiday season, and think that while you are having fun, you are also enhancing your community.

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This article was written for Lowcountry Weekly by The Congress for the New Urbanism - Carolinas Chapter. For more information visit www.cnu.org

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