

Some Ideas for Gift Alternatives

Alternative giving is a form of gift giving in which the giver makes a donation to a charitable organization in the recipient's name, rather than giving an item. The idea of giving something to one person by paying another was invented by Benjamin Franklin as a "trick ... for doing a deal of good with a little money," which came to be known as "paying it forward."

This form of giving is often used as an alternative to consumerism and to mitigate the impact of gift giving holidays on the environment. Charities that promote this type of donating will normally provide a card or certificate describing the donation, often with an example of how the donation will be used (such as one day's worth of food for a hungry person) or a symbolic denomination, called "ownership" or "adoption" (of an animal or a tree for example). (From Wikipedia)

www.alternativegiftregistry.org/why.php Alternative gift registry

www.heifer.org Heifer International provides farm animals such as chickens, rabbits, goats, and sheep to families in developing countries. The recipients agree to pass some of the offspring from the animals on to others in their community. In FY2008, Heifer had 869 active projects in 53 countries/provinces and 27 U.S. states. Heifer projects around the world help families achieve self-reliance; gifts are passed from recipient to recipient until entire communities are transformed.

www.kiva.org Kiva is an organization that allows people to lend money through their website to microfinance institutions in developing countries which in turn lend the money to small businesses. The donor can select the business to which they loan money; as the money is repaid, the donor is notified and when the entire loan is repaid, the donor can make a loan to another business.

www.treesforlife.org Trees For Life started with the planting of fruit trees in India and now works in Guatemala, Cambodia, Nepal, Costa Rica, Haiti, Indonesia, Brazil, Mexico, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, and El Salvador as well. As a result, tens of millions of fruit trees have been planted. Trees For Life also does projects on bee-keeping, fuel-efficient stoves, improvement of their soils, water conservation, scientific improvement of plant breeding materials, self-help loans, and improvement of medical and educational facilities.

www.altgifts.org Alternative Gift International funds both national and international projects in several categories: hunger relief, shelter, water, livestock, sustainable agriculture, the environment, medical assistance, peace and justice, development, child survival, education, and emergency disaster relief. Its goal in selecting projects is the abolition of global poverty and the renewal of the planet's endangered environment.

www.buildingnewhope.org/alternativeGifts Building New Hope works primarily in El Salvador and Nicaragua promoting fairly traded organic coffee; operating career training centers; alternative schools and literacy programs for underserved and at-risk youth; and funding income-generating projects for women and community organizing initiatives. In the past we've organized people-to-people work delegations, developed alternative energy projects, and supported emergency relief and reconstruction efforts to assist victims of catastrophic events.

www.habitat.org/donation/gfth/ Habitat for Humanity International works to provide shelter for low income families in the United States and in developing countries.

www.seva.org The Seva Foundation's goal is to build partnerships to respond to "locally defined problems with culturally sustainable solutions." (In Sanskrit, seva means "selfless service.") Seva responses to these local problems range from sight saving and restoring projects in Nepal, India, Tibet, Cambodia and Tanzania, to community self-development projects in southern Mexico and Guatemala, to diabetes prevention programs for Native Americans. Look under "Gifts of Service."

Local Organizations You Can Donate to This Holiday Season

Salvation Army	http://www.salvationarmycapitalregion.org/
Food Pantries for the Capital District	http://www.foodpantries.net/donate.html
Unity House	https://secure.ggiv.com/cps_donors/?key=unityhouse
The Regional Food Bank of NE New York	http://www.rfbneny.com/
Capital City Rescue Mission	http://www.capitalcityrescuemission.com/
City Mission of Schenectady	http://www.citymission.com/
Joseph's House & Shelter	http://www.josephshousetroy.org/
Homeless Action Committee	http://www.homelessaction.com/
Homeless & Travelers Aid	http://www.hatas.org/
The Albany Housing Coalition, Inc.	http://ahcvets.org/
Trinity Institution	http://www.trinityinstitution.org/
The Women's Fund of the Capital Region	http://www.womensfundcr.org/
Albany Social Justice Center	http://www.albanysocialjusticecenter.org/
Literacy Volunteers of Rensselaer County	http://www.lvorc.org/
Parson's Child & Family Center	https://www.parsoncenter.org/index.asp
Equinox, Inc.	http://www.equinoxinc.org/