

Published December 5th, 2012

## Sustainable Giving

By Sophie Braccini



Nanette Heffernan and her children making candles.

Photo provided

When it comes to wrapping the gifts, the Heffernans get creative. "We mostly use recycled tissue paper that we save," she says. "Sometimes the kids take a used food container, like a cream cheese container, and decoupage it by ripping little pieces of tissue paper, painting the container with a layer of watered down glue and sticking the colorful pieces on it."

Making their own gifts or giving what they no longer use can be a great way to increase kids' mindfulness of waste. "We gather all of the toys we do not use any more, as if we were going to do a garage sale. We take pictures of every piece. Then I send an email to everybody I know locally before Christmas and say, first come first serve, just come and take it," explains Heffernan. She also asks for what she needs, like this year, a tabletop art easel with a drawer for her daughter.

And reusing items doesn't have to be just between friends. There are also a lot of great local thrift and consignment stores where gently used treasures can be found, without breaking the bank.

Hilton House in Orinda displays an impressive array of Christmas objects and collectibles, including a great collection of carolers. Wayside Inn Thrift Shop in Lafayette has bargain-priced Christmas attire and also offers a selection of seasonal collectibles.

For holiday clothing, Rosie's Upscale Consignments is worth seeking out on Brown Avenue next to Fast Frame in Lafayette, and in Orinda, Cheryl's Closet on Orinda Way, next to Hilton House, is a good bet. Also worth checking in Lafayette: Chameleon Consignment, They Grow So Fast (for children), Nifty Thrift, and Hen House.

"All I've sold for the last few weeks are Christmas items," says Hen House owner Elizabeth Kirkpatrick. In her store, patrons can find vintage ornaments, village scenes, or even full trees.

"It makes me chuckle! Last week a woman came for a gift exchange for her book club," she says. "I recommended a delicate pink tea cup with its saucer, coupled with some good tea."

There are different ways to be planet-conscious when shopping for the holidays - making your gifts yourself, buying things that last and are well made, or buying pre-used items or giving others the things you don't need anymore.

Nanette Heffernan, a Lafayette mother of two, makes gifts with her children, organizes a free gift-cycle with gently used toys, and only makes or purchases gifts that will be useful to their recipients.

"Every year with the kids we create gifts for their grandparents, aunt and uncles, and baby sitters," says Heffernan. "The most popular are the tea-lights that are fabulous and super easy to do." Heffernan bought silicon molds to make the candles because they are very easy and pop right out when they're done. She has star, flower, and shamrock molds. The kids melt paraffin (found in craft stores) and pour a little bit into each mold, put in a candle wick, then add sprinkles of old crayons that have been smashed into small pieces. The crayons melt into the hot paraffin and add color and texture to the candles.

"We also make hand soaps using the same molds, and the kids add tiny flowers on top for decoration," she says.



Beth and Betty at Wayside Inn Thrift Shop in Lafayette. Photo Sophie Braccini

Reach the reporter at: [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA