

EDITORIAL

with Dawn Brown

Gifts that give back

Earlier this week my son happily pointed out that he only had two more weeks left until his Christmas vacation started—which less-happily reminded me that I was fast running out of Christmas shopping days. Procrastinator that I am, I have so far only bought for three people on my list. Though, list is perhaps a touch lofty for my line of names with question marks written beside them.

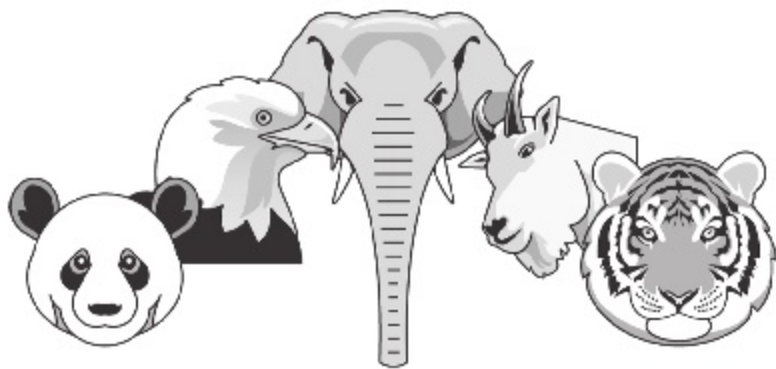
If you are like me, there are a number of people on your list who you have no idea what to get them. So this year I decided to try to be a little more creative with my shopping, and I started looking at options beyond the shopping malls. At this the time of giving, I thought exploring some options for gifts that give back would be fitting.

World Vision—worldvision.ca—has a gift catalogue that allows people to purchase vital items for people in need around the world. Gifts include agricultural packs, clean water, medicine and so much more. Gifts range in price from under thirty and up, and when a purchase is made in loved one's name a card or e-card is sent to them.

For the animal lover in your life, the World Wildlife Fund Canada—shop.wwf.ca—has an adopt an endangered animal program. By adopting the animal of your choice, you receive a seven inch plush toy, personalized adoption certificate and information about how your donation will be used. Prices start at \$40 and go up.

Not sure which charity a loved one would prefer to support? Canada Helps—canadahelps.org—might be what you're looking for. Here, you can purchase a gift card and your friend or family member can decide where they would like to donate your gift. Canada Helps supports a number of charities in a number of categories including, animals, education, religious, social services, environmental and more. Here there truly is something for everyone.

These are just a few options for gifts that give back. For those people in your life who are difficult to shop for or seem to have everything, helping someone in need in their name might be a fantastic alternative to yet another tie or scented candle while keeping with the true spirit of the season.



FLU SHOT: Acton Rexall pharmacist Dina Riad gave Wellington - Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott his annual flu shot on Friday. A few years ago, a study concluded that Ontario's universal flu shot program has saved several hundred lives and averted a substantial number of hospitalizations, doctor and emergency room visits every year. - Submitted photo

He's back!



By
Angela Tyler

Four long years ago Ernie entered our lives. Anybody who knows my family would probably think that Ernie is one of Little J's beloved reindeer. However, sadly he is not. Ernie is our Elf on the Shelf. I've wrote about him before. Frankly, Ernie and I have a love/hate relationship. I don't love him much and it's certainly not far off hating him.

Let's review what Elf on the Shelf is...according to the all knowing Wikipedia "*The Elf on the Shelf: A Christmas Tradition* is a 2004 children's picture book, written by Carol Aebersold and daughter Chanda Bell and illustrated by Coë Steinwart. The book tells a Christmas-themed story, written in rhyme, that explains how Santa Claus knows who is naughty and who is nice. It describes elves visiting children between Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve, after which they return to the North Pole until the next holiday season." The condensed version is this elf appears out of nowhere and sits frozen all day in a place then each night he or she magically return to tell Santa all the bad stuff that the kid did. In other words, he's the stool pigeon, the "rat", the tattle-tale... he is Cindy Brady when she used to tell Mike and Carol Brady all the

stuff that the other Brady kids did.

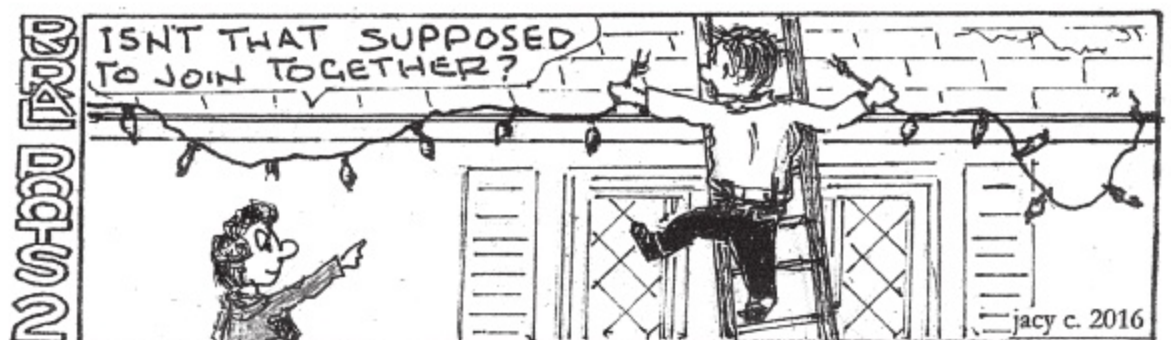
I have never liked Ernie. I don't like that he is supposed to squeal on kids. I think the energy that goes into the antics the elves get into is exhausting for parents. Sometimes I think it is more for the parents to share on social media then for the actual child.

For two years I tried to bond with Ernie. He would wake me up at two in the morning while I would be in cold sweats remembering that Ernie was still in the same spot as he was for the past two days. Two was our magic number though. Two years ago Ernie went back to Santa on Christmas morning and oddly did not return last year. He was thought of here and there however, the thoughts were easily distracted. Life was good. Life was elf-less.

Then this past Sunday at church, the kids gathered with the other children and sat with our minister during the "children's focus" time. It is a time where the clergy and the children take a moment to reflect,

relate and learn. However, this Sunday in their best attempt to relate current trends with the religious teachings and Biblical stories of the season, Elf on the Shelf was used for the contemporary part and suddenly I was inundated with the questions "Where is our elf?" "Do you think he's coming this year?" "Why isn't our elf here?". I know she didn't mean any harm by trying to relate the Elf seeing all and God seeing all, but since then my life has become an internal struggle. Do I allow Ernie to enter are life again which really means I have another 17 sleep interrupted nights ahead waking up trying to come up with some clever Elf set-up or do I keep re-directing when his whereabouts are questioned?

I'm feeling the pressure. I'm feeling mom-guilt. I'm actually feeling guilt about wishing bad things to happen to that creepy little Cindy Brady like elf, yet I was okay with it until meeting them coming off the bus. They even shared with their bus driver that they don't know where our elf is. Oh curses Carol Aebersold, why did you have to share the story you told your kids? I guess I need to find a Home Sweet Home sign in anticipation for Ernie's return.



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