

Christmas doesn't need to cost the Earth



Your Earth

Suzanne Elston

As a self-proclaimed Christmas junkie, I often find it difficult to reconcile my desire to spend with my greater desire to walk gently on this good Earth.

Every time I enter a shopping mall during the holiday season, my ecological conscience reminds me that Canadians are part of the privileged 20 per cent of the world's population that consumes 80 per cent of the world's resources. For the retail industry, the bulk of this consuming is done in the two months leading up to Christmas. With careful planning it is possible to celebrate the season without costing the Earth.

The most direct way to address the inequitable distribution of global wealth is to support Third World development agencies such as OXFAM Canada's Bridgehead Trading Company. Bridgehead's unique catalogue offers a wonderful selection of clothing, toys, household items and other handmade gifts from around the world. Sale of Bridgehead goods directly benefit the workers who produce them. For a copy of this year's catalogue, phone toll-free 1-800-565-8563. In the event of a postal disruption, Bridgehead will be making alternative delivery arrangements as of Dec. 1.

Christmas, we often hear, is for the children, and yet throughout Canada and the world, it's often children who suffer most at this time of year. Purchasing Christmas cards from UNICEF is a wonderful way to send holiday greetings and benefit the world's needy children. According to Jerry Seligman, director of marketing for UNICEF Canada, 75 per cent of UNICEF's revenues come from Christmas cards sales.

Exchange participants sought

This year, more than 400 Canadians of all ages will take part in AFS Interculture Canada's programs in 54 countries around the world.

AFS Interculture Canada, Canada's leading international exchange organization, is a volunteer-driven educational program that promotes global education, entrepreneurship and community involvement through international school and work based internship programs for young and old.

Those interested in more information about AFS or its programs should phone 1-800-361-7248.

For those who don't wish to send cards at all, Seligman suggests making a direct donation to the world's children through a **Please see page 19**

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