

November 23, 2006  
Suburban Living Section

## Thoughtful Gifts That Don't Contribute to Clutter

Kim Mikus, Daily Herald Business Writer

If you're tired of giving ties, slippers and itchy sweaters - let's face it, most of us feel the same way about receiving these gifts that require little thought. Who needs more stuff to stuff into their closets anyway? But what to give? Magazine subscriptions and spa gift certificates come to mind (perhaps Food Network superstar Rachel Ray's year-old magazine or a couple's massage). You can find plenty of more creative options, though. Here are some to get you started.

- Who wouldn't like tickets for a guided tour of the Chicago Antique Market or a midnight moonlight sail from Burnham Harbor? Check out [www.excitations.com](http://www.excitations.com), a Web site that offers a variety of gifts at a wide range of prices, some as low as \$50.- It's tough to find educational gifts for little ones on your list.

A Lake Bluff business offers a piggy bank for the 21st century, along with tips on how to teach children about saving money. The piggy bank features chambers to collect money for four ways to it - saving, spending, investing and giving. The \$16 bank comes in the shape of a football, pig and cow. Check out [www.msgen.com](http://www.msgen.com).

- Buying things other than gift cards for teenagers can be tricky. Two local moms recently came up with software offering

young adults "tidbitz" that pop up daily on their computers. Tips are a mix of practical and humorous with versions for guys (DudeBitz) and girls (ChickBitz). One example: "If you lend someone money, be prepared you may never get it back." The CDs sell for \$19.95 through Amazon.com.

- Busy people who'd like a family dinner without the stress and mess might enjoy a gift certificate to one of the growing number of meal preparation places. Dinner By Design is the biggest franchise in the area; find others at [www.easymealprep.com](http://www.easymealprep.com). If you're really ambitious, you could make the meals and deliver them to the recipient.

- Tickets to a musical are entertaining. A new block of tickets recently went on sale for "Wicked" at the Ford Center for the Performing Arts, Oriental Theatre in Chicago. Tickets for "The Color Purple" are on sale for shows that start in April at the Cadillac Palace Theatre in Chicago. Go to [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com).