

PUBLISHER'S NOTE



Hello everyone! Here we are, entering the last month of the year! There's a nip in the air, Christmas lights are popping up everywhere, and the hustle and bustle of the Christmas season is here! There are many different traditions and activities that take place during the month of December and the Montana Woman family is excited to share some of our traditions with you. As you thumb through the pages of this month's issue, I hope you are inspired to share some of your traditions with us on our Facebook page. You may have a special recipe, craft, or activity. Whatever it is, please share it with us!

Regardless of whether you celebrate Chanuka, Kwanza, Christmas or Solstice the holidays are important to us all. It is a time of tradition and time spent with family and friends. Unfortunately, it is also a time of tremendous pressure. Pressure to find the perfect gift. Pressure to cook the perfect meal. Pressure to attend all the holiday activities and parties. Pressure to achieve perfection. This year I encourage you to relax and *enjoy* the holiday season. Don't expect perfection from yourself or the one's you love. Be grateful for every minute of life, no matter how messy. After all isn't it the messy moments that make some of the best memories?

Over the years, I have found that it isn't the present that truly matters. It is the love put into picking the present. I recently learned of a new way to give love with all presents. I am going to embrace this new concept and make it part of my year round gift giving tradition. It is simple really. I will write 'appreciations' to every person I give a gift to – a simple little note attached to each present to let the receiver know how much I care about them and how their presence enriches my life.

Growing up my mother instilled in her children the importance of giving to others. Whether it was with time or money, she explained that we should take time to make a difference in someone's life. I cannot begin to count the hours spent at the Montana Veteran's Home in Columbia Falls writing cards for residents, reading to them, playing checkers and reliving days gone by. Those hours helped shape my life.

Mom always encouraged us to think of those less fortunate than us and give back to the community any way we can – especially during the holiday season. Mom made sure we knew that sharing the holiday spirit of giving cannot be measured by a dollar amount. Serving food in a soup kitchen, caroling to shut ins or donating time at a non-profit organization are just some of the ways that she directed her family to deliver holiday cheer. I continue to embrace this tradition and encourage others to do the same.

I think that Winston Churchill said it best: "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." However we choose to celebrate, or even if we don't, let us remember it is not only about the gifts we will receive and the time spent with family and friends. It is also about the gifts we can give to others and the joy we can spread. Let's all have a wonderful holiday season and spread as much joy as humanly possible. Ready, set, go!

Take Care,

Cindy