GIVE GREEN GIFTS

On average, Minnesotans creates six pounds of waste per person per day. From Thanksgiving to New Year's Day, residential waste increases by more than 25 percent. Additional food waste, packaging, wrapping paper and decorations add about one million extra tons per week to the nation's garbage piles. By changing the way we celebrate during holidays and throughout the year, we can also celebrate a cleaner environment. One thing you can do is make your own gift boxes and gift card holders instead of spending money on new materials that often cannot be recycled. You can also give low-waste presents by creating a homemade gift, sharing an experience or providing a service. Through these creative projects, participants can make the gifts they give both affordable and green.

Outcomes

- Participants will use alternatives to gift wrap with reused materials.
- Participants will learn ways to reduce waste during celebrations.
- Participants will get ideas for giving green gifts.

Audience

Youth (ages 5+), adults

Time

20 – 60 minutes

Concepts

- Gift wrap is generally not recyclable, but there are many alternatives for wrapping gifts in reusable materials.
- You can give green gifts by creating a homemade gift, sharing an experience or providing a service.

Supplies

- One empty box with separate top and bottom (example: shoe box), container (example: Pringles can) or empty toilet paper roll per participant
- Large, flat pieces of newspaper, old maps or posters, brown paper bags cut open, or any other reusable paper that is large enough to wrap around the container you're using
- Scissors
- Glue or tape
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils, ribbon, string or fabric for decorating the paper *(optional)*

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Preparation

- Gather supplies for the activity in advance on your own or work with participants to brainstorm sources of used paper and collect it.

- Create a green gift box and green gift card holder in advance to become familiar with the process and make samples.

Procedure

Green gift box

- Make sure each participant has a box or container to create a green gift box.

- Have participants use scissors to cut paper, newspaper, old maps or posters to fit the size of the box or container.

- Have participants wrap the box or container with paper, newspaper, old maps or posters, using glue or tape to secure paper. Make sure participants wrap the top and bottom of the box separately so the gift can be opened and reused over and over again. Participants can secure any loose edges or corners with glue or tape.

- Have participants use markers, crayons, colored pencils, ribbon, string or fabric to decorate the outside of the box or container if desired.

- While participants are creating green gift boxes, have a discussion about alternatives to purchased and new gifts. Ask participants to brainstorm ideas for gifts that are homemade, reusable, recyclable or edible. Ideas include: baking cookies or giving ingredients to cook a treat or meal, giving an experience such as concert or movie tickets or a restaurant gift card, creating a homemade keepsake, or providing a service such as babysitting or mowing the lawn.
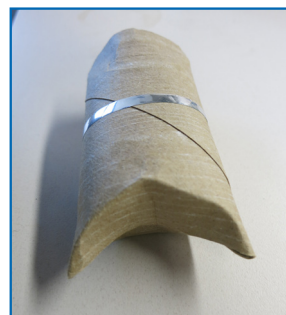
Green gift card holder

- Make sure each participant has at least one empty toilet paper roll to create a green gift card holder.

- Have participants use markers, crayons, colored pencils, ribbon, string or fabric to decorate the outside of the toilet paper roll if desired.

- Have participants fold in one half of the roll at both ends and fold the other half of the roll on top of it to enclose the roll. A crescent shape should form at both ends of the roll. Participants can re-open one end of the roll when they are ready to place a gift card inside and give it as a gift.

- While participants are creating green gift card, have a discussion about alternatives to purchased and new gifts. Ask participants to brainstorm ideas for gifts that are homemade, reusable, recyclable or edible. Ideas that could be given in the green gift holder include: gift cards, favorite recipes, an experience such as concert or movie tickets or a restaurant gift card, or a voucher for a service such as babysitting or mowing the lawn.

Start by folding one half of the toilet paper roll at both ends.

Fold the other half of the toilet paper roll to enclose it.

Example of green gift box made from a Pringles container.

Example of green gift box made from a box.

A crescent shape could form at both ends of the toilet paper roll to enclose it.

Completed decorated gift card holders.

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Discussion questions

- Why do you think people use new gift wrap every year?

- What kind of difference would if make if everyone used green gift wrap?

- In addition to using green gift wrap, what else can you do around holidays or celebrations to reduce waste? (Use reusable dishes at parties instead of disposables, providing recycling options, etc.)

- Have you given a gift that was homemade, reusable, recyclable or edible before? What was the reaction to the gift?

- What other ideas do you have for giving green gifts?

Additional activity ideas

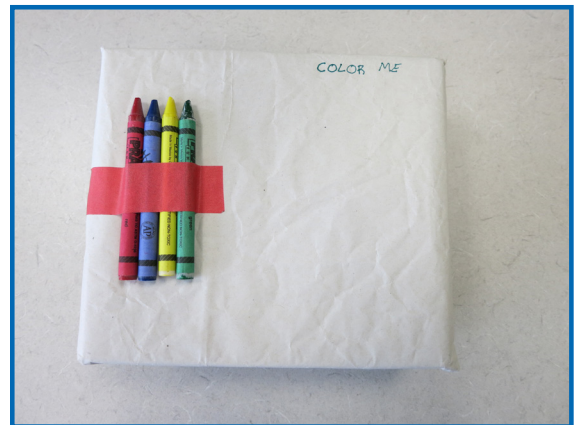### Make gift tags out of repurposed greeting cards

- Collect greeting cards. Using scissors, cut the greeting cards into various shapes and sizes as desired. Use a hole-punch to make a hole to tie a ribbon through and attach to gift.

Examples of gift tags made from repurposed greeting cards.

Give a coloring gift box

- Use white or light-colored packaging paper to wrap a gift box. Attach 3-5 crayons or markers to the wrapped box with tape and write a note that says, "color me before opening."

Example of a coloring gift box.

Check out the Green Parties Learning Trunk

The Green Parties Learning Trunk helps illustrate ideas for hosting greener parties and includes party supply examples for high-waste parties, low-waste parties, and parties with organics for composting as an option. The trunk also includes an engagement guide to facilitate brainstorming and planning an example party with the group. Check out a learning trunk at *angela.ziobro@hennepin.us* or visit *www.hennepin.us/ environmentaleducation*