

## Party with a purpose!

When you get together with your friends and family this holiday season, rather than just give, why not give back?

Everyone tosses change to the bell ringers, most churches and schools have angel trees, and many people give generously to help put turkeys on more tables this time of year. But there are many other creative ways to help your community around the holidays, some from the comfort of your own home.

- December 6th is National Mitten Tree Day. Host a holiday get-together, have fun, and do some good at the same time.
  - Start with story time for the younger guests with a reading of “The Mitten Tree” by Candace Christiansen or “The Mitten” by Jan Brett.
  - Bake cookies, drink cocoa, sing carols, and most importantly, make a Mitten Tree! Have a small-to-medium sized Christmas Tree set up in your foyer or near the entrance to your home, and have each partygoer bring a new pair of mittens as their “admission.”
  - Challenge your guests to get colorful and creative with their choices, and take plenty of pictures of your crafty creation!
  - Afterwards, donate the new pairs of mittens to a local shelter, church, or other charitable group to help warm hands and hearts.
  
- Here are some other ideas for giving trees and parties with a purpose:
  - Have guests bring gas cards in any denomination and hang them on a bare tree with pretty ribbons. After the party ends, donate the cards to Meals on Wheels, hospice, or other non-profit organizations where volunteers drive to serve people in your area. Even \$5 can make a difference for someone who has the heart but not the budget to help those in their community.
  - Host a “bring an ingredient” soup party then feed someone in need. For variety, assign each guest one ingredient to bring then cook up a unique creation while catching up. When the soup is ready, drop it off at a soup kitchen, church, Ronald McDonald house, or any area organization that accepts pre-cooked donations to help feed the hungry.
  - Have your party at someone else’s house for a “decorating day.” Who do you know that isn’t able to get their own home ready for the holidays? Do you have an elderly neighbor, recent widow or widower at church, a family dealing with long-term illness or military deployment who can’t physically or mentally get into the spirit of the season? Invite your friends to that house, and ask them to bring along new or gently used lights, wreaths, or other holiday décor, then get to work.