

Best Last-Minute Gifts

BY REBECCA BEASLEY

HOLIDAYS NEVER FAIL to bring a little bit of stress, which makes it easy to forget to get gifts for a friend or two. Look no further for a list of budget-friendly, last-minute gifts for whoever it is you missed!

First, I'll dive into gift ideas for those girls on your list. Maybe it was your mom, a sister, or a friend, here's a couple ideas for her. For most women, a trip to Target will be your savior. They have \$10-\$20 blankets, beanies and hats under \$15, and my personal favorite, \$5 mugs. You can't go wrong with a "self-care mug" filled with a hot chocolate packet or tea bag, maybe Lindor chocolates or fuzzy socks, and other little goodies. Chapstick, face masks, scrunchies, or nail polish is another option. Also at Target are cheaper candles and scarves, ranging from \$5 to \$20. If you're looking for more of a one-item gift, I'd recommend a book or jewelry. Etsy is a good place to find quality items from small businesses, but making time to shop local will only be beneficial.

Next, for any guys you still need to get gifts for. Shopping for guys can be difficult. Step one is to think of his interests. There are a lot less "generic" type gifts for guys than there are for girls. First ask yourself if socks or slippers are his thing. Those can be found just about anywhere for a decent price. If the man you're shopping for has a beard, I highly recommend putting together a "beard care kit" made up of beard balm, conditioner, and maybe lotion. These things tend to be in the same area as shaving cream and other bathroom items. Just like with girls, you can't go wrong with a mug or tumbler gift. Depending on his favorite drink, put together a water bottle or mug gift. Fill it with edible tidbits and the like. Maybe stop by the campus bookstore and find a sweatshirt on sale. Consider board games or card games such as Cards Against Humanity, One Night Ultimate Werewolf, or Uno.

Other gift ideas you can get anyone include tech accessories like headphones, phone cases, or portable chargers. These can be as expensive or inexpensive as you like, depending on the brand. Don't forget about nerdy gifts such as a Lord of the Rings recipe book or brain teaser puzzles. Reusable masks have made it onto shopping lists, too. Remember, try to support small businesses in your area! COVID has created especially hard times for these businesses, and the holiday season is the perfect time to support them. Try to avoid ordering everything off Amazon or other dot coms. Even for last-minute

Are We Heading Towards Another Shutdown?

BY ETHAN LANGEMO

THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT the shutdown our country went through had a massive impact on several aspects of our lives. Small businesses were forced to close permanently, unemployment reached levels comparable to parts of the Great Depression, basic necessities were taken en masse by greedy, paranoid hoarders, and people were denied the ability to see friends, family, and neighbors due to being confined to the space of their homes. The Trump Administration's orders for a national lockdown and restricted travel to and from China was a first step to help save the economy and lives. Eventually, the economy has begun to bounce back as people are gradually able to go back to work and make money to support themselves and their families. However, the question of whether we are heading back into lockdown and what that would entail is unclear.

Several European countries, including Germany, England, France, Belgium, and Greece, went into a second lockdown in early November. Israel imposed a second lockdown far earlier, starting on September 23rd. Leaders from countries such as Brazil and Russia have stated that there is no intention to put the country into lockdown. Whether the U.S. will or will not go into a second lockdown is unclear. While it was able to prevent millions of deaths, it also had unfavorable effects. Joe Biden, the next President-elect of the United States, has made claims that even he does not want to see the country go into another lockdown. Ms. Celine Grunder, one of Biden's top advisors, stated that the goal will hopefully be to implement a

more "targeted" plan, which will probably mean different states will need to follow different levels of restrictions

With the possibility of a vaccine being approved and made available as early as December 10th, there may not be a need for a lockdown whatsoever. But a vaccine being available so soon is only a possibility, and if things continue to spiral out before then, some sort of lockdown (not necessarily another full-scale national lockdown) might be in order. The effectiveness of the vaccine may also be a deciding factor on whether or not and how much lockdown gets put in place. If it is hit-or-miss, it will probably be safer to continue taking precautions and staying in quarantine if individuals test positive. If it has a high success rate, however, none of that may be necessary.

Ultimately, I think the possibility of another lockdown rests on when the vaccine comes out and its effectiveness against COVID-19. There is a lot of uncertainty as multiple companies race to get their treatment out, and right now it appears the big pharma giant Pfizer is in the lead as they await FDA approval for their vaccine. If it doesn't come soon enough, however, we might see another lockdown, but I don't think it will be as extreme as the big one we experienced starting back in mid-March.

Christmas Traditions

BY BRITTANY MCCARTY

WHAT ARE SOME OF your favorite traditions during the holiday season? For some of you, it might be a family tradition, and for others, there may be no traditions at all – or perhaps you celebrate another holiday or observe a religious custom, such as Hannukah or Ramadan. Either way, 'tis the season to celebrate: our traditions, our family and friends, and above all, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the center of Concordia University as well as the world.

Across the United States, most of us are familiar with the story of the birth of Jesus as the Savior, and this is depicted in the many nativity sets that may be put on display at churches and in homes. Another familiarity that we see is the cross, which of course is the universal symbol of faith. But unbeknownst to some is the Advent wreath and candles, which signifies the three weeks preceding Christmas and Christ's birth.

Other things that Christians identify with during this time of year: What would Christmas be without a tree? Whether your tree is like that of Clark Griswold's in *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* or like the measly tree that Charlie Brown had, and whether real or artificial, there is something to be said about the Christmas tree. It is where we gather around; it is where we tuck away gifts on Christmas Eve; it is where we adorn with sentimental ornaments and tinsel. I think I remember even stringing popcorn together one year, something that few people do anymore. Regardless of how you decide to decorate your tree, or whether you have a tree at all, may it shine brightly and be used to bring your family and friends a little closer together.

Other traditions that I remember growing up were things like going to the Macy's Holidazzle Parade, to see Santa, as well as writing Santa a letter. Baking cookies and driving around the neighborhood to see all of the Christmas lights on people's houses were favorites also, and my personal favorite, watching all of the various Christmas movies. *It's a Wonderful Life*, *The Santa Clause*, *A Christmas Story*, and *Elf*, among others, were tradition in our house. Vaguely do I remember creating gingerbread houses – who doesn't like all of the candy and frosting?

Perhaps a more sacred tradition would be singing Christmas carols, which unfortunately has dwindled over the years. Yes, we still sing traditional hymns in church, and of course here at CSP, but that is about as far as it goes. Many of us will be looking forward to the Christmas concert that we are having virtually this year, and God willing next year it will be in-person, on campus once again as tradition would have it.

All in all, it is my hope that this has stirred some memories within you for this holiday season, no matter if we are being socially distant or not. Have an enjoyable and safe Christmas, and remember the number one reason why we celebrate – because of Jesus Christ, our Savior.