

## Gift giving

by Lisa McKimm



Do you find that your family can spend quite a bit of money on presents for birthdays and other celebrations?

What's more - do you often feel it was frittered on items that were 'bought because I couldn't come up with a better idea'.

I know that feeling too. So a couple of weeks ago - with my birthday pending, I asked my kids to 'do something for me, rather than buy something'. I couldn't have been happier with the results!! They organised me a great birthday celebration. They made up a small guest list, phoned everyone and arranged a pot luck BBQ. Then last Saturday - on the day of my birthday, the house was all action. Some went off to Frankton markets to buy flowers, and the house was filled with containers of gorgeous blooms. They wrote shopping lists and a huge supermarket expedition followed. One daughter then made platters of nibbles, another created salads and hot dishes. Boyfriends were just as involved - the lovely Bryce scrubbed his heart out!

First the spa pool that had become a stagnant breeding ground for mozzies, and then the winter-abandoned BBQ. Another boyfriend was vacuuming (Thanks Seb) and yet another was scrubbing garden chairs. Nature provided a beautiful evening and the garden was candlelit. Not only did dinner get cooked and served up by the kids - but all the cleanup was done too!!!! It was the most fantastic gift - and I truly felt like the Birthday Princess.

Have we lost our way from this kind of 'doing' for people. As TV advertising hooks us up to material things that we love for five minutes - and then struggle to find cupboard space for afterwards - maybe we should re-examine the way we celebrate special times. Whilst on radio with Mark Bunting this week, we asked callers for special things that their kids had done for them on Birthdays and Christmases.

Some great stories came in. Some had written beautiful letters about why they loved their Dad. Others had made their first morning cups of tea and slice of toast, and wobbled their way to the bedroom with it. Another had encouraged and helped his Mum to relearn to drive a vehicle and be independent again after a serious illness.

And a real favourite of mine was the little girl who wrapped a box beautifully, announcing that this was a Box of Love for her Mum. Inside were hundreds of tiny brightly coloured pieces of paper with the word Love written on each one. Her Mum says that it is a constant source of Joy for her to look at and touch.

I can imagine the long use that that box is going to get - why it might even become a true family heirloom! Don't believe everything that the ads say - the true gifts of love come from the heart, not the mall.

© Lisa McKimm, 2000

More articles for parents online at: <http://www.parentingworx.co.nz/fantastic-reading/>