

TIS THE SEASON

“The Season” is approaching. You can feel it coming. But it’s an itch you can’t yet scratch. A queasy dread gnaws at you that you’d better get ready even though it’s weeks away. And when the approaching holiday storm arrives, life gets stressful. We decorate and prepare. We spend time with family members we don’t normally see, (and sometimes don’t want to see). We address and stamp and wrap and mail, checking our lists as we rush from office party to neighborhood gathering. Somehow we manage to get to church and put the miniature manger scene on the mantel and trim the tree and the turkey while suffering constant agony each December Sunday as the Bears move closer to the Super Bowl but drop the ball, at critical moments, fumbling and tripping like shoppers in the crowds we frequent as we look for the perfect gift in the playing field of unabashed commercialism.

It can be a real merry-go-round. But you can’t change it. What you can change is your own perspective on the season’s rolling thunder. As Indian Guide, Indian Princess and Trailblazer dads, we profess to be loving and giving people. It’s in the Six Aims of our Program, two of which are: To love the sacred circle the family, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. That’s where our focus is best aimed: loving one another. We do this by giving of ourselves, our time, and our possessions. We provide our time and love to our children, our families, our children’s organizations, our schools and our communities. The gift of ourselves and our time are gifts that last well beyond the holiday season.

As we look out at the looming storm of holidays and the dark cloud of seasonal frenzy, we have a chance right now to give of ourselves and change our outlook. So get this dialed into your Blackberry, your Treo, your I-Phone and your Franklin Covey Planner. Forget the frenzy, because there is work that needs doing: selling Christmas Trees at the Y’s Men’s Club Christmas Tree Lot.

Beginning the weekend after Thanksgiving and continuing through mid-December, the Prairie Trail Federation assists the Y’s Men’s Club with the sale of Christmas Trees. All Guides Tribes, Princess Tribes and Trailblazers will be assigned a few hours to work at the Christmas Tree Lot. Plan on participating! Your kids will enjoy the tree lot and so will you. Every participant receives a cool patch for their efforts, and your kids will begin to understand what giving back to our community is all about. Make it a tribal event! After selling trees, try heading back to a tribal member’s house for hot chocolate and cookies. There is a Guides Tribe that has done this many times and the kids now fully anticipate the tradition every holiday season.

Can you recall the work of selling trees last year? It was cold enough to see your breath as dads opened the bundled trees and set them in the racks. There was a light snow falling and swirling on the ground. Loose pine needles, once swept, spread an aroma that only the Christmas Tree Lot can create. Cold air, snow and pine. Mmmmm . . . it’s a transforming magic. A Christmas feeling falls over us as the snow falls. It’s the enchanting, magical dust of the season. But there is work to do and we set to it. Yes indeed! Particularly the dads, as we joke and backslap each other while loading trees on cars and vans. The fellowship is remarkable. It feels great just thinking about it. The recollection is clearer now. The light snow continues to fall through the warm yellow light of a single string of incandescent light bulbs giving the entire tree lot a welcoming glow, casting long shadows under the pines and firs, where every now and then a bright-eyed, rosy, young face pops out from under the branches and giggles with the pleasure of hiding from dad in this make-shift forest.

The tree lot participation gives everyone the Christmas Spirit. Working the Y’s Men’s Christmas Tree Lot isn’t work at all. Working the tree lot is fun. Giving of one’s self and one’s time is fun. Even joyful. Not work, but a joy. Yes. Giving of one’s self is a joy. Giving one’s time is a joy. Yes, giving is a joy.

Whoa . . .

Giving - is - a - joy.

Now we're on to something. It is indeed the season. The season of joy. The season of giving.

In addition to selling Christmas Trees there is another unique opportunity to feel the great joy and satisfaction of giving. That opportunity is Secret Santa.

During November, the Prairie Trail Federation carry's the mantle of tremendous generosity in supporting the Secret Santa Project of the Community Nurse Health Association of La Grange. This program is a winner! The Princess Tribes and Guides Tribes that participate follow a shopping list of items needed (think: clothes) or desired (think: toys) by a local boy or girl who's family is otherwise unable to provide these items for their children. Due to adverse or unfortunate circumstances, changes that cannot be anticipated, or being new citizens stuck in low paying jobs, these impoverished families cannot afford Christmas gifts. So Secret Santa provides them, and our Tribes do the shopping for Secret Santa, one child at a time, identified only by their first name and their wishes for the holidays. We shop as Tribes, kids and dads all in their vests, prowling the aisles of Target with our lists in hand buying gifts for a child who would have none but for us. When the shopping is complete, the bags of clothes and toys are dropped off at the Community Nurse Association and distributed to the recipient families allowing children in our community, who have little, to receive a bountiful Christmas.

Every dollar you spend on Secret Santa is used to support underprivileged children who live right here in our communities. The Community Nurse Association provides the health care and Secret Santa provides the gifts. You'll feel great doing the shopping and donating to Secret Santa. Plus your tribe is awarded Honor Points for your efforts. Information was distributed to your Tribal Chief at the November Longhouse meeting. Put this activity in your calendar! Open up your heart and wallet! Some tribes sponsor multiple children. You and your tribe can be one of those too. Then on Christmas, in your own home, when you open gifts, you will think about the Secret Santa children you helped to support. As your own children open exciting toys and games, you'll know that somewhere in our circle of communities there are Secret Santa children opening the necessities of life such as underwear, socks, hats and gloves and they are thrilled to receive it. They will also unwrap the toys, games, books, art supplies and special gift requests that you provided. Don't be surprised if your own kids think of this too and realize the importance of benevolence and how fortunate they are in their own lives.

It's a fact: Americans are the most generous givers of all people around the world. We work hard, but also have big hearts. And Secret Santa is fine example. As a Federation we provide Christmas for nearly 225 boys and girls which is about 25% of the recipient children at Secret Santa. This is money well spent. If you've ever helped at the distribution days at Secret Santa, you've seen the impact of our giving. The beneficiary families arrive dressed in their Sunday best to pick up the makings of Christmas morning for their children. The gratitude is tremendous. Our giving makes a dramatic improvement in the lives of the children of Secret Santa.

This is truly the season to give back. To step out of the commercial frenzy and live the joy of generosity. To soak in the well-deserved satisfaction produced by our own benevolence; to be strengthened and renewed through selfless acts of generosity. It is indeed the season to give and, in return, feel just great!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to You and Yours!

Peace,

Federation Chief Silver Cloud (Tom Estey)
Federation Sachem, Keokuk (John C. Lorenzen)