

Christmas cards designed by children is a new trend

BY JILL JENKINS
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Merry mayhem, holiday hubbub, frenzied festivities. No matter how you phrase it, the holiday season is busy, busy, busy.

From last-minute shopping to tree trimming to baking goodies, the lists of holiday duties seems never-ending.

And that's without including the rush to get Christmas cards sent out before Christmas — a sometimes difficult task.

But Alison Burns of Traverse City has found a way to not only make creating Christmas cards more enjoyable but also a wonderful opportunity to include her children — Aaron, 12, Amanda, 8, and Carly, 4, — in the process.

And it all started with a cute drawing of a snowman last year by daughter Amanda. Instead of using clip-art from her computer, Burns decided to scan the picture and use it as the main image on the front of the card.

"She just drew a really cute picture, and I thought it would be perfect (on the cards)," Burns said. "It worked out really well."

Amanda was no stranger to having one of her drawings on a card, having also created her own birthday invitations. But that's not to say she wasn't excited about receiving top billing on the Christmas cards.

"She was very pleased," Burns said. "She thought it would be great."

She wasn't the only one. Recipients of the cards also

enjoyed the unique holiday greeting.

"People thought it was cute," Burns said. "We got a lot of positive comments on it."

This year, Burns will use a piece of art work from each of her children. The challenge, though, will be incorporating each drawing and trying to get the kids in the holiday mode early enough to have the cards done by Thanksgiving.

But any challenge would be worth it for Burns.

"You have to be in the spirit of things," Burns said. "But that kind of thing is important. We try to add some meaning behind the cards, so to include everybody is always better."

Giving Christmas cards meaning is something PetSafe, an area animal rescue group, has accomplished. The non-profit organization will sell cards designed by kids as a fundraiser this year.

Jennifer Isbell, PetSafe's vice-president, helped plan the project, which was actually a contest for school-age children. The kids were asked to draw a picture for the cards, and four designs were chosen.

"A volunteer came up with the idea of selling Christmas cards, and I thought of getting the schools involved," Isbell said. "I thought it would be a good idea."

Only 40 entries were received, but Isbell expects that number to go up next year. This year's winners were Kellie Kohler, 7, Grand Traverse Academy;

Samantha Giddis, 9, Lake



These Christmas card designs were selected from elementary student entries, with proceeds to benefit PetSafe. The art above was created by Dannie Giddis III, from Platte River Elementary. Right, a card design by Samantha Giddis of Lake Ann Elementary.

Ann Elementary; Dannie Giddis, 11, Lake Ann Elementary; and Heather Jobson, 13, Buckley.

"It was the first year, so I didn't expect an overload," Isbell said. "I think I just need to start a little earlier next year. I'm expecting even more participation next year."

Isbell's first printing was 1,200 cards. After talking with members, though, she's expecting to do more.

"The more I talk to members, the more I think I'll have to do two or three more printings," she said. "Our members are all excited about it."

But the members aren't the only ones excited.

"The kids (whose designs were chosen) are really excited," Isbell said. "Not only with helping the animals but also seeing their cards printed."

Isbell believes this project is not only a good fund-raiser for the group, but also an excellent way to educate kids about PetSafe's purpose.

"I feel this project will help educate the public about the cats and dogs we rescue in a positive way," Isbell said. "Often, people don't want to think about the homeless pet population in their city, especially during the holidays when they'd rather focus on good news."

"I think by doing a project like this, it allows the kids and the public to help animals in our organization without dwelling on statistics or sad stories. It's a way to let the people know there is a problem, but to do it in an upbeat fashion."

Anyone interested in using a piece of their child's artwork on cards might benefit from a few tips by Dan



Rickard, owner of The Copy Shop in Traverse City.

"Stick with bright colors," said Rickard, who also recommended creating the drawing on a piece of paper proportional to the size of the card. "The real light yellows, browns, reds and oranges — any of the scanners have a hard time with those pastel colors."

That's not to say a picture with those colors couldn't be made to look brighter. But Rickard said the cost of enhancing the image would probably be more than people would want to pay.

While Rickard deals with a wide range of images, he did note seeing an increase in the number of orders with kid art.

"We're starting to see more of the kid's stuff," Rickard said. "We do so many cards. We do from professional watercolor artists all the way to (cards with kid art)."

"It doesn't have to be a professional-type image. It can be a personal thing."

And isn't that really the point of the holidays?

Jill Jenkins is a local freelance writer.

Holiday shopping in scenic Leelanau County

BY SHEILA GARRETT
Special to the Record-Eagle

A quick look around the Leelanau Peninsula reveals a diverse selection of village stores to visit when shopping for this year's Christmas gifts.

The atmosphere is warm and friendly, service personalized and parking isn't such an issue.

In Suttons Bay, the shopper in search of the unusual usually finds Enerdyne, the nature and science store. For one, they claim to possess the largest selection of telescopes and binoculars for adults and children in the state.

"This Christmas looks promising and we expect to have a good sales season," said owner Pat Cookman.

Relatively inexpensive gifts are available, such as an anemometer. The instrument informs boaters and land travelers of wind speed and direction plus indoor and outdoor temperatures at a glance.

Other new items include 20 styles of Wondermugs, which change colors and images when hot liquids are poured into them.

Kids will enjoy the Gobblet Game, similar to TicTacToe. For adults and children there's Scrambled States of America, a geography game.

Just across the street is Lima Bean boutique. Eclectic clothing and trendy urban separates are available, said Rachel Peplinski, the store's owner. "We offer women's plus sizes down through late teen's small."

She explained that there are many fitted styles for the younger set and nicely detailed popular sweaters in natural cotton and wool fabrics. Look for dressy designs in heavy winter pullovers and many colors in lighter weight year-round sweaters.

Gift accessories include wooden, ceramic and glass beaded jewelry plus bottle-cap belts with seatbelt clips, license-plate purses and the latest in footwear.

Shoppers can choose from such brand names as FLAX, Liz and Jane and Winter Sun. "We are also offering lots of flannels this season,"

Peplinski added.

Molly's of Leland boutique carries women's separates that include sweaters, sweatshirts and sleepwear plus personal accessories.

"Hand-knit sweaters are a popular Christmas gift for most wardrobes. We have cozy zipper-neck styles available in great colors," said Molly Hyde, the store's owner.

She suggested that shoppers see this year's collection of sweatshirts and one-size-fits-all medium weight sweaters. Also look for Nick and Nora brand flannel pajamas in prints including snow globes, sock monkeys and skiing ducks, to name a few.

Personal accessories include domestic as well as French import bath and body soaps and lotions. Likewise, you can select from many aromatherapy products.

The Tin Soldier in Leland offers specialty handpainted and crafted pottery and ceramics.

"The shopper can buy high-end or low-end gifts for the holidays and get something that's original," said Trudy Atkins, manager. "Also, we have a nice selection of greeting cards."

Hadley pottery collection includes holiday plates, cups and mugs, as well as over 50 year-round patterns. Crystal dishes and cups are also displayed. Gift shoppers can select original Sue Bolt hand-done ceramic and glass tiles with the months of the year on them. The Charlevoix artist's collection includes signed vases picturing angels and mother/child themes.

Another personal collection, from Julie Pearson, includes painted tiled mirrors, angels and other Christmas figures.

For personal use, there's Lady Primrose hand and face creams, soaps, bath oils and lotions in handy containers, such as pitchers and sugar shakers.

The Black Swan in Glen Arbor includes a line of women's dressy and casual clothes for work and evening wear.

Christy Marshall, the boutique's owner, believes that shoppers are seeking more bargains this season with



less emphasis on impulse buying because of the tighter economy.

"Customers will get more personal service from us," said Marshall. "And we can hunt down those special items they might not see."

Stripes are big this season and, once again, sweaters are topping the Christmas list. There are plenty of pullover and cardigan styles, plus a selection of accessories including scarves, mittens and gloves to augment a woman's wardrobe.

Marshall wants to remind everyone that many of the Leelanau area stores are open year around.

Are you shopping for craft enthusiasts? A trip to Cedar will let you visit two side-by-side home craft shops.

The Liberty Quilt Shop lets you select gifts from vintage and modern assembled quilts, or choose quilt kits with already-cut patterns and fabrics.

Owner Michele Mueller offers a collection of lamps, clocks, sewing boxes and bird houses, some made locally. New this year is a

selection of area rugs.

Inish Knits, next door, features a multitude of yarns — some hand dyed — from countries such as England, Wales, Scotland, Italy and France.

Owner Peggy Day-Serbin suggested that shoppers might like to view the new stock of spinning wheels.

She also offers handmade jewelry, baskets, ribbons, buttons, beeswax candles and lavender goods.

A stop at Northport's North Country Gardens will reveal a 4400-square-foot store with



Liberty Quilts in Cedar offers finished quilts as well as materials and kits to create them. Also available are lamps, clocks, sewing boxes and area rugs.

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gifts for the entire family. Merry Hawley, office manager, explained that the year-round Christmas section offers the offbeat in ornaments and a line of Santa collectibles.

Another feature is Nicholas Moss sponge pottery including dishes, cups, serving plates and mugs in animal, floral and holiday designs and patterns.

Don't miss North Country Gardens' selection of china dinner plates, serving dishes, cups and saucers.

A children's section offers

toys, games, books and room decorations. Babies will love the stuffed animals, cuddle blankets and learning toys for 12-months through 2 years. An extensive boxed greeting card section offers brands not found in other local card shops.

A short walk brings the holiday shopper to the garden area, where bird feeders, lawn statues, backyard globes and other garden ornaments offer many gift ideas.

Sheila Garrett is a local freelance writer.