

Gifts to snow significant others

By JAY SAUNDERS
Assignment Reporter

For many, the years of shopping for family members has made picking out gifts fairly easy.

But finding that special present, the one that says I love you, for one's treasured sweetheart — not so easy.

Romantic gifts for girlfriends, boyfriends, husbands and wives range from jewelry to fragrances to clothing — intimate and otherwise. And although Christmas is weeks away, some UNL students have already started to shop for their significant others.

"I kind of did a little general clothes shopping," sophomore Ericka Hascall said. "I bought him what guys would never buy for themselves." She declined, however, to say exactly what she bought.

Stores are seeing a lot of people like Hascall who are getting their shopping done early. A lot of stores are having both pre- and post-holiday season sales. David Finkelstein, a manager at American Eagle, said Hascall is not alone in shopping for clothes.

"We have sold a lot of sweaters and flannel shirts," Finkelstein said. "Those are classic items that never go out of style."

Hascall said she got all of her shopping done

for her boyfriend before Thanksgiving break. Some people weren't not as fortunate.

Freshman Lynnae Westphalen said she has some of her shopping already finished. She said a lot of gift giving just comes from being practical and knowing what a person needs or wants, either person.

"I knew he needed cologne because he was running out," Westphalen said. "I usually think what I would like. If I don't like it, I don't want him wearing it anyway."

A lot of people, both men and women, have waited until now (or even later) to buy that holiday gift. Junior John Wisker said he tries to listen to his girlfriend so he can get an idea of what to buy her.

"I try to pick up hints about what she likes," Wisker said. "I take what I know of her and try to find something she'll like."

This season, it seems women are getting a head start on holiday shopping.

Sharon Endorf, manager at County Seat, said she has seen a lot of college-age women coming through the store shopping for their boyfriends. Endorf said a lot of times that guys won't come through until the week of Christmas.

Senior Tony Rathgeber said guys are not bad shoppers, but struggle finding creative things to buy. One year, Rathgeber said he bought his significant other a teddy bear with a ring around its

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TONY RATHGEBER
sweetheart shopper

finger.

"I try to think of something that isn't generic or run-of-the-mill," Rathgeber said. "That is probably what makes it hard."

One store where men may be uncomfortable is Victoria's Secret. For years, television has based holiday shows on the male character having trouble going into a lingerie store to shop for his wife or girlfriend. Wisker said it's not only fictional characters who have that problem.

"(Victoria's Secret) has that aura of women's only," Wisker said. "It's all-woman land."

That is exactly how the store, which doesn't just feature racy undergarments, doesn't want to be known. This holiday season, the store is selling a lot of robes and anything packaged, such as lotions and fragrances. Store managers are more than welcome to help men who need help shopping.

"We see a lot of people pacing in front of the store before getting the gumption to come in," a

manager at Victoria's Secret said. "If you need help, just come in and ask one of us."

Students are buying a lot of clothes, but accessories are another popular gift. Joe Molack, an employee at Helzburg Diamonds, said a lot of men are buying "appreciation gifts," such as earrings and necklaces with their girlfriend's birthstone.

But don't worry about spending big bucks for a great gift. In talking to students, a common theme is that the thought of the gift, not the price or appearance, is what is important.

"People shouldn't worry about getting the perfect gift," Rathgeber said.

Westphalen said her boyfriend didn't get her what might be considered "perfect," she said she would love it just because it was from him.

"Even if he gets me the most raggedy-ass thing," Westphalen said. "I would keep it and wear it for him."

Area charities donate cheer

By AMANDA SCHINDLER
Staff Reporter

As the holiday spirit descends upon Lincoln residents, area charities are feeling its effects through the many donations of time and money received.

The generosity during the holiday season is wonderful for those who benefit from such services.

Unfortunately, their need does not end when Christmas lights are taken down, and many charities are left with a lack of funds when the holidays are over.

"Most people think of charities during the Christmas months," said Randy Jones, executive director of the American Red Cross, Lancaster County Chapter.

"But human need is 365 days a year."

Jones said another reason charity donations increase during the holiday months and decrease afterward is the tax benefits for donations made before Jan. 1.

Salvation Army director and 35-year charity veteran Robert Boone said holidays evoke a spirit of contribution among people, but "need knows no season."

Other charities, such as the March of Dimes Birth Defect Foundation and the Make-A-Wish Foundation, which grants wishes to terminally ill children, do not see such drastic changes in fund raising. Only those charities focusing on basic human needs such as food, clothing and shelter experience a decrease.

There is help, however.

Along with 51 other organizations, the Salvation Army and the American Red Cross are secured from such a post season dry-spell by an entirely different charity.

The United Way of Lincoln and Lancaster County is a fund-raising organization that provides supplemental funding for human service charities like the Salvation Army and American Red Cross. Affiliated with the Combined Health Agencies Drive

(CHAD), it represents 53 different health and human service agencies in the area.

United Way Marketing-Communication Director Laura Shorney said the United Way does its fund raising before the holidays start, and leaves the season to other charities' events.

She said the United Way does the majority of its fund raising through companies, in which employees can make donations in their company's name directly from their paychecks.

"It's easy for them and for us," she said.

What the United Way collects is then allotted to each agency monthly beginning in January.

Executive director Sandy Rupp said such a system is beneficial.

"It's a stability for the agencies," she said. "And it lends them credibility."

This credibility has been threatened in the past, though, said Wende Baker, executive director of another United Way agency, the Food Bank of Lincoln.

She said telemarketers posing as Food Bank representatives were calling people seeking donations, but not for the charity.

She said some charities, however, do legitimate telemarketing.

although United Way does not.

"There's an environment now where people aren't as close to the organization as before, but still want to give," she said. "The phone is a way they've become used to doing business."

Even if the call is legitimate, some of the donation collected will inevitably pay for the phone service, rather than helping those in need.

And the United Way is proud of its low administrative costs, Shorney said.

"It's one of the most cost-effective agencies around," she said. "Ninety cents out of every dollar go to the agencies."

This is a high rate compared to some charities only using 14 per cent of donations for charitable purposes. The highest donor dollar percentage is held by the American Red Cross, with a 97 cents of every dollar benefiting the needy.

Another advantage to the United Way system of fund raising is donors can give any amount, and be sure that it will benefit 53 different agencies, Shorney said.

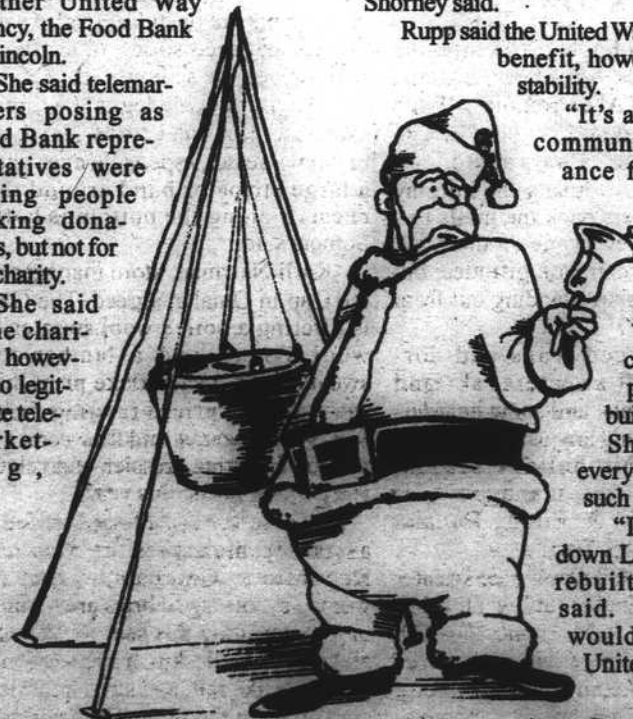
Rupp said the United Way's biggest benefit, however, is its stability.

"It's a lot like a community insurance fund," she said.

"It's not just one type of charity. We act as a community planner and builder."

She said every city needs such a service.

"If you tore down Lincoln and rebuilt it," she said. "There would still be a United Way."



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