

# Newsroom

December 9, 2010

Georgia Southern University

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Georgia Southern University

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# Georgia Southern University Faculty Expert Offers Tips on Teaching Children the Joy of Giving

DECEMBER 9, 2010

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It seems as soon as parents stash the superhero and princess costumes from Halloween, kids are already down to business writing lists for Santa. Lyrics of "Jingle Bells" are often drowned out by the tunes of "I want" and "Give me" as each new commercial displays the bells and whistles of a new must-have toy or gadget.

The focus on gifts often leaves parents wondering how to direct kids' attention away from presents to the bigger "reason for the season." But what can parents do to raise a child who enjoys giving as much as receiving?

Alice Hall, associate professor of child and family development at Georgia Southern University said it's the tactile, hands-on experience that makes the strongest impression on kids of all ages. There is nothing better than facilitating the giving process so that the child is invested in the decisions and the outcomes.

"It's important to involve your child in giving from the beginning if possible," said Hall, who has taught child development classes since 1999. "Let them make or choose the gift and pay for it; or volunteer as a family at a soup kitchen. When kids are directly involved, they become invested in the outcome and will learn the joy of giving."

Hall said that an early start is best, but it's never too late to instill the value of giving. Older children can use allowance money to purchase gifts for siblings. A family can also "adopt" a child for Christmas and each person can choose and pay for a present to give. Volunteering at a nursing home, shelter or soup kitchen will also open their eyes to see how less fortunate community members live.

The biggest pitfall, Hall warns, is not having a plan.

"Parents need to decide what values they want to instill in their children and they need a plan for how they will teach these things," said Hall, who has implemented these strategies with her own daughter. "Results will not come from a one-time event and it requires more than just giving during the holidays; parents must take every opportunity to be good examples, initiate conversations about giving and facilitate hands-on learning experiences."

Hall's tips for teaching kids about giving:

*Inspire Creativity:* Take children to a pottery shop and let them choose and decorate pieces themselves. It will encourage them to think about the recipients' preferences and stimulate their creativity. It will also show that time, effort and consideration are all part of the giving process.

*It's the thought that counts:* Have children color a picture, make a craft or frame a completed puzzle that the recipient will like. Teach them the importance of giving to others based on thought, not expense. Teach them that each gift should be an expression of love.

*Teach them value:* Give younger kids a few dollars and let them choose presents for family members at a dollar store or encourage older children to save allowance money to purchase gifts for siblings. Kids will learn the concepts of saving and value with the exchange of money for a gift.

*Wrap it up:* Keep kids involved in all aspects of giving. Let them color pictures or choose their favorite gift bags and wrapping paper. The more they have invested in the gift, the more joy they will experience during the process.

*Take it outside:* Lessons on giving should extend outside the home. Be sure to engage in regular conversations about giving to those who are less fortunate. Volunteer as a family at a local soup kitchen; "adopt" a child for the holidays; collect change throughout the month for kids to give to a local non-profit or their school; or even talk to them about helping fellow classmates who may struggle in a particular subject area.

*Set a good example:* Kids learn their most valuable lessons by watching parents and letting them see your own efforts to give to others.

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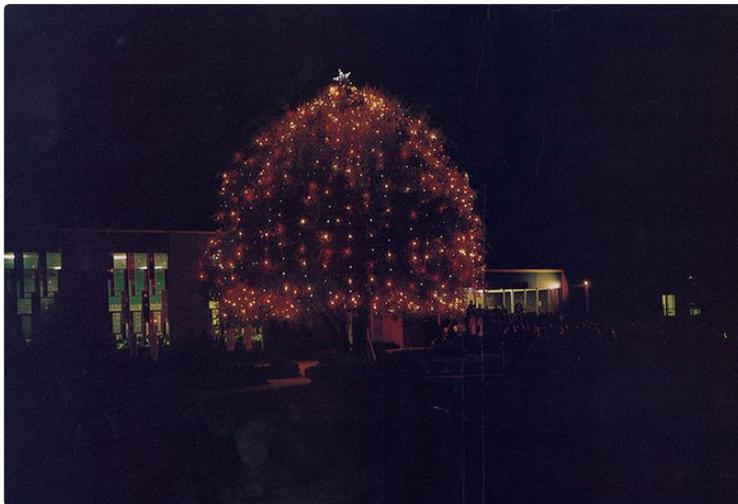
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"O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree..." 🎄🎵#TBT to circa 1964, when a tree in front of the Williams Center was decorated for the holidays.



14h



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