

Dear Readers,

Today is the first chilly day in quite awhile and is helping me better accept that the holidays are quickly approaching. My family has always celebrated a hybrid of Hanukah and Christmas traditions exemplified by the one year my sister and I received handmade, red velvet with white lace Christmas dresses as our Hanukah gifts. Now that I live in Colorado with my family back on the east coast and having my husband's family to consider as well, the holidays sometimes seem to be more of a juggling act than a relaxing time to share traditions and each other's company.

One tradition that keeps my family connected during the holidays, no matter where we are, is a stocking exchange. Here's how it works.... One person is in charge of selecting buddies, we'll call him or her the elf. You can rotate this job yearly so that everyone gets a chance to be surprised. The elf will put the names of all participants on individual strips of paper and also write each name down on a piece of paper. Making sure that no one gets himself or herself the elf will select a stocking buddy for each participant:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Stocking Buddy</u>
Joe	Susy
Susy	Tom
Tom	Joe

We usually do this process around Thanksgiving so that the participants have plenty of time to shop for goodies to give to their stocking buddies. Sometimes we are all together and have the chance to marvel at the creativity of the stockings. Other times stocking stuffers are traveling by mail crisscrossing the county. I suggest putting a money limit so that stockings are equal in value, if not ingenuity. Even if you don't celebrate Christmas, a gift exchange is a way to limit the number of gifts you need to purchase while keeping family connected.

I also wanted to share some ways to participate in holiday cheer at Parenting Place and support our programs and families.

- **Adopt a Family**- each year Parenting Place supports about 60 families through our Adopt a Family Program with a gift certificate to Target. We are asking for cash donations or gift certificates to Target. By providing gift certificates, we allow families to purchase the items they need most.
- **International Holiday Potluck**- Join us Friday, December 14<sup>th</sup> starting at 10am. We will have Music with Madelyn and food from around the world. Please bring your favorite dish to share.
- **End of the Year Donations**- If you are looking to make an end of the year tax-deductible contribution, please consider giving to Parenting Place. We have many goals in 2008 for improving and expanding our programs and your donation can help us reach these goals. Remember that many companies will provide matching gifts.

Happy Holidays!

Salutations,

Gail Sawchuk  
Executive Director