

GIFT IDEAS

Planning Ahead Can Help Reduce Holiday Stress

(NAPSA)—The best gift you can give yourself this holiday season is to start your plan well in advance. Although reminders about holiday shopping seem to arrive earlier each year, the lack of an actual plan can mean little gets done until the last few stressful weeks.

To make your holidays merrier—and less stressful—here's a master plan:

September

Once life gets back on track after the summer vacation, start to make some lists. Who will you send cards to? Who are you buying gifts for? Ask family members where they plan to be for the holidays. This time also offers a great opportunity to browse through the stores that you've always meant to visit.

October

Don't wait for Black Friday. These days, stores have special offers all year round. With time on your side, look for innovative gift ideas. Presents with thought behind them are always appreciated more. Look for cards that will be special for friends and family to receive. For example, the Mouth and Foot Painting Artists (MFPA) uses reproductions of its artists' unique, original paintings to produce holiday cards, gift wrap and gift ideas such as a 2014 desk calendar—another great way to plan even further ahead—puzzles and books. The worldwide for-profit organization is owned and run by disabled artists and helps them to earn their living through direct sales to the public.

If you don't receive one of these mailings and wish to buy MFPA products, visit its website at www.mfpausa.com or call (877) MFPA-USA.



Dennis Francesconi putting the finishing touches to President Lincoln's face on Mt. Rushmore.

One of those artists is Dennis Francesconi. As the result of a water-skiing accident when he was a teenager, Francesconi was permanently paralyzed. Then, he taught himself how to write, and then paint, using his mouth. He has participated in over 75 exhibitions around the world. The recent success of the movie about President Lincoln at this year's Oscars inspired him to paint a winter scene of Mt. Rushmore.

November/December

Now that you've earned some breathing space, it can be a good time to start writing holiday cards in preparation for posting. You can make a holiday card even more special by thinking carefully about the message you write inside. It's likely the card will be on display for a few weeks, so you will want to make sure the message is from the heart. And don't forget to include personal photos for your loved ones.

Once the cards are in the mail, write up your holiday menu and confirm invitations for parties. With all this work behind you, you will now have time to enjoy the season with friends and family. You'll have earned it.