

GIFT IDEAS

Make A Plan To Reduce Seasonal Shopping Stress

(NAPSA)—The best gift you can give yourself this holiday season is to start your preparations 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 desk calendars, books, prints and puzzles. 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 their website at www.mfpausa.com or call (877) MFPA-USA.

One of those artists is Cindi Bernhardt, who was paralyzed as a teenager as a result of a gym-



B.B. King portrait by Cindi Bernhardt.

nastics accident. Bernhardt paints with a brush in her mouth and her "Crying Eagle" painting to honor the emergency service people of 9/11 appeared in The New York Times. Among the high points of her life was carrying the Winter Olympics torch on her wheelchair through the streets of Pasadena. Another of her passions is blues music, and one of her portraits of B.B. King was signed by the legendary musician and auctioned to raise money for an orphanage charity.

November/December

Now that you've earned yourself some breathing space, it is a good time to start writing cards in preparation for posting. A holiday card is always special to receive, so make it even more special by thinking carefully about the personal words you write inside. They will be on display in the homes of your friends or family for a few weeks, so make sure the message is from the heart. And don't forget to pop in the envelope any personal photos for your loved ones. Write up your holiday menu and confirm invitations for parties and special meals.

With all this work behind you, you will now have time to enjoy the season with friends and family. You'll have earned it.