

# newsworthy trends

## 'Tis the Season For Online Shopping

(NAPSA)—This year more than ever, the holidays are expected to be a time for generous, heartfelt greetings and gifts, and for celebrating the American spirit. Many retailers and online services provide people with ways to express and share their patriotism online. For example, America Online has a special area inviting people to donate to local or national charities, shop for bountiful bargains and last minute gifts in a safe environment, and even find products "Made in America."

Here are 10 good reasons to shop online this season:

**#1 P.J.s and Jingle Bell Slippers**—When you shop online, you enjoy the luxury of staying in your toasty flannel p.j.s and slippers, with a hot cup of cocoa nearby, while leisurely browsing the cyber-aisles of e-tailers worldwide. Shopping online allows you to create an electronic wish list, save time by locating products at a nearby retailer or have the perfect gift for Aunt Mamie delivered to her door. You can also shop online at a store that allows the recipient to exchange the gift at their local store, such as Barnes&Noble.com, Eddie Bauer, gap.com, and Sears.com. For those with the desire to wrap every gift personally, try ordering online at stores such as Circuit City and then picking up the item at a nearby store.

**#2 The Gift of Time**—Online shopping saves precious time that could otherwise be used to help a family, hug a neighbor or give blood. Maybe even bake a cookie or two.

**#3 Access to Online MegaMalls**—Millions of consumers worldwide opt to shop online, scooping up deals on brand-name items via a variety of cyber-shopping areas. These include: Shop@AOL, Netscape.com, CompuServe.com, and AOL./shopping. AOL, for example, connects consumers to more than 200 best-of-breed merchants.

**#4 Local Goods Even Closer**—To access great local shopping information, check out AOL's Local Guide at KW: Local. Simply type in your zip code and Local Guide connects you to the best venues that



**Getting a line on all you can get and do for yourself and others online may help raise your spirits this holiday season.**

have the product you are seeking, located in your neighborhood.

**#5 Eleventh Hour Gifts**—Last-minute shoppers can revel in their procrastination by sending a quick-click gift certificate or a nifty gift, available from a wide variety of merchants. Many e-tailers will even wrap the gift and sign the card for you too.

**#6 24/7 Customer Service Help**—Customer service representatives are available to help you in many e-stores, and so are special areas that cater to the specific needs of first-time and veteran online buyers.

**#7 Way-Cool Gifts to Warm the Holidays**—From Godiva chocolates to high thread count sheets to DVD players, a huge array of luxury items and gadgets await those searching online for everyone on their lists. Check out Neiman Marcus online for everything from picture frames to a postcard perfect Epicure trip to Europe. Online shopping gives consumers access to exclusive and unique items that are sure to please the most persnickety people on your list.

**#8 A Safe, Secure Shopping Experience**—More than ever, consumers can feel safe shopping online as many e-tailers offer guarantees of a secure online shopping environment. For example, all Shop@AOL Certified Merchants must meet stringent security and customer service require-

ments before they sell a single item. And always remember: the easiest way to protect yourself from credit card fraud is to never give your credit card information or password to unauthorized persons contacting you via e-mail, Instant Message, or telephone. In addition, all purchases made from AOL's Certified Merchants are backed by AOL's 100 percent satisfaction guarantee.

**#9 A Bonanza for eBargain Hunters and Budget Stretchers**—For nearly new Beanie Babies, everything American (more popular this year than ever), fitness finds and furniture, get in on the quick-click action on eBay, where you can bid on nearly every type of present under the sun. The savings can be big and the thrill of bidding, fun. eBay's Auction for America campaign invites consumers to buy or sell an item, with all profits going to relief efforts in the wake of the September 11th tragedies.

Another way to shave some holiday green off your shopping budget is to check out bargain corners such as Shop@CompuServe's Shopping Support Forum, which provides updates on some of the best deals online. Creative craftspeople can also save money this season by ordering online materials they need to make from-the-heart holiday gifts.

**#10 Hand Made in America Handiwork**—There's no better gift than helping those in need. This year the Helping Hands II: Handmade in America philanthropic campaign will raise important dollars to benefit relief organizations helping people after the September 11th terrorist attacks.

Celebrities will be invited to create hand-crafted items that reflect patriotic spirit. Beginning in early December, these "handiworks" will be featured in a special holiday catalog on Shop@AOL and offered auction-style through eBay. 100 percent of the proceeds will go to relief efforts. Individuals can also make a donation to relief charities in their favorite person's name through Helping.org.