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Grandparent gifts needn't puzzle you

By SANDRA TOIBERT
SPECIAL WRITER

It's that time of year again and you just can't do it, shouldn't do it, won't do it. You are certain your aging parents or grandparents are secretly bored with that same old box of chocolate cream candy, red tie, furry slippers and flannel pajamas.

Making and preserving memories through photography was the answer for local grandparents Bob and Colia Rasico of Rochester Hills, who received their first photo calendar of their grandchildren six years ago as a Christmas

gift. Both agree that Christmas wouldn't be the same without this special gift. Colia adds, "They are our keepsakes. I take it everywhere we go, even on trips. Then I can see my grandchildren whenever I'm away."

Every year favorite photos of their five grandchildren are gathered, dropped off at Kinko's with a calendar order for all the grandparents.

Each grandchild has the month of their birthday exclusively devoted to them. October is a group pumpkin patch photo of the grandchildren dressed in costumes and December the group Christmas photo, while summer months have beach and swimming scenes. According to the Rasicos, these are calendars they will never throw away.

For \$29.95 Kinko's will create an 18 inch x 24 inch calendar with a different photo enlarged to fill each flip page. (Choose 12 photos (one for each month) and that extra special group photo for the cover. It takes only 24 hours, but hurry to beat the Christmas rush as it has been known to take up to four days during the holiday season. Other designs and sizes are available for costs ranging from \$4.95 to \$29.95.

A collage of photos that tell a story as the grandchildren grow through dance recitals, first bike rides, trick or treating, birthday parties, sports and hobbies is another way for grandparents to share in the busy life of their grandchildren. Mat and frame the collage replacing yearly with a new collection of favorite photos.

Another suggestion is to frame and mat colorful artwork created by children and replace with new creations as the years go by. Grandparents love this

art as their grandchildren grow into young adults.

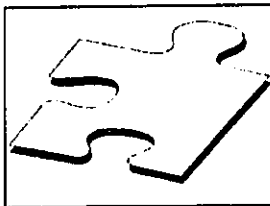
Senior citizen Marie Fillbrook recently became computer savvy and recommends computer related gifts for the senior. After her stroke, she was left with weak muscles, a limp and poor hand control. That didn't put a damper on her letter writing - she took to learning the computer.

One year ago her son bought her a computer and she has been at it ever since. Fillbrook says, "I love it. I get e-mail every day and write letters. It keeps me from getting bored."

She feels that there couldn't be a better gift for the senior with hand disabilities such as tremors, post-stroke weakness or arthritis. She adds, "I never took typing, but that didn't stop me. I type with two fingers."

A prepaid computer class designed for seniors, easy-to-learn software, and, of course, a computer are some suggestions for the senior who already has everything. Here are some others:

- A living thing such as a special baby tree to be planted in their chosen backyard location when spring arrives.
- Other living things such as an herb garden complete with packaged dirt, seeds, gloves, ceramic pots and watering can.
- Large print or talking books for the visually impaired senior.
- Homemade videotape of the grandchildren to complement the art-as-they-grow framed collage or photo calendar.
- Membership in an exercise club that specializes in senior level activities.
- An exercise video to complement the exercise club membership.
- Nordic Track exercise machine for that big gift from the whole family. Prices range from \$899 to \$1499.
- An Entertainment 2000 book, which can be purchased for \$40 at Rite-Aid, Meijer, Kroger and some organizations. For online ordering try www.entertainmentbook.com.
- Tickets and transportation to a current concert or play with dinner afterward at their favorite restaurant.
- Place a favorite grandchild photo on a mug or tee shirt. CVS (previously known as Arbor Drugs) is offering this service for \$12.99 per mug and \$16.99 per shirt. They recommend placing your order by December 13 to guarantee arrival for the holidays.



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