

# Plan now to buy, send holiday cards

By CARA COREY • Special to the Register • October 17, 2010

The holiday season is fast approaching, and for many of us that means making time to send out holiday greetings to friends and family. The Greeting Card Association reports that more than 2 billion boxed and individual Christmas cards were sold in the United States last year. So we're definitely attached to the tradition of sending cards, whether it's to update friends and family on our lives, show off our DIY skills, or give a small gift to everyone on our list.

"So many traditions throughout the holiday season are based on the idea of connecting with friends and loved ones," said Arin Wiebers, co-owner of East Village card shop, Ephemera. "It makes sense, then, that we are naturally inclined to share that same sentiment by sending a card to those who are too far away to connect with in other ways."

## Cards that give back

Consider purchasing cards from organizations that give part or all of their profits to charities this year. (Find more options at [www.cardsthatgive.org](http://www.cardsthatgive.org).)

- Children's Cancer Connection is selling sets of 24 holiday cards featuring eight designs by children in their summer camp programs (\$14). Call (515) 243-6239 or go to [www.childrenscancerconnection.org](http://www.childrenscancerconnection.org) to order. Cards are also available at local stores, including the Brass Armadillo, The Lagniappe, and Simply for Giggles.

- The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, which has an Iowa Chapter, sells a variety of holiday cards designed by children with diabetes. Go to [www.jdrf.org](http://www.jdrf.org) to view and purchase cards.

- Beginning Thursday, Nov. 11, bring your family to the Animal Rescue League to get a professional photo taken with your pet. All proceeds go to the ARL, and you'll have the perfect photo for your holiday cards.

## Have writer's block?

Callista Gould, a certified etiquette expert with the Culture and Manners Institute in West Des Moines, suggests hand-writing short messages on cards rather than tucking in a copy of a year-in-review sheet.

Your message to each person should be personalized.

"To a childhood friend I might say, 'I hope you get some snow for this year. Remember when we used to sled on the back hill? I am glad we have been in touch all these years!'," Gould said. "To someone who sent me a photo in their card, 'I loved the picture of your kids that you sent in your card. They both look like you! (Lucky dogs!) Are either one of them showing your sense of humor yet?'"

## Get them in the mail on time

Pam N. Woods, a certified professional organizer and owner of Smart WorkLife Solutions in West Des Moines, offered these tips for organizing your card-writing and mailing operation.

- Compile names and addresses throughout the year on your Blackberry, computer or in your address book. "Otherwise just getting that in order can be a humongous project," Woods said.

- Decide which occasion you would like to target for each person on your list. You could send a card for Thanksgiving or New Year's rather than Christmas. "So many cards are exchanged over Christmas - we kind of get numb to the messages we're getting," Woods said. "Sometimes I just do it on a different occasion so people will have a chance to absorb what I've been sharing with them."

- Purchase your cards early or use an online service. Woods said she has used [www.sendoutcards.com](http://www.sendoutcards.com), a Web-based service that allows you to choose cards, personalize them, upload photos and then import your contacts and decide when you want the cards to be mailed. "I can't recommend it highly enough," she said.

- Determine how many cards you need to write each week to get them all mailed on time. "People have to think about how they want to structure their time, whether it's five cards a day or 20 a week," she said. Woods also suggested writing the date that you want to send the card on the corner where the stamp goes. When you're ready to send that batch, just place the stamps on top and mail them.