

Mary Ann West: Lap Dance for Santa and other Off The Wall Gift Ideas

With the economic meltdown putting us all in a funk, here are a few ideas to lift your spirits, help others as well and be kinder to your bank account.

Yes, a Lap Dance for Santa or your partner, so get your eyeballs out of the gutter and print out a self-made certificate for your sweetie to be redeemed at a more appropriate moment. Sex is the gift that keeps on giving and when the economy sours, it's up to you to keep a level head (no pun intended) and get creative!

The same fitness craze that brought us belly dancing and pole dancing and now has us Lap Dancing. This is not about the tawdry aspects of sex; it's about power, the power of the woman. She makes the rules. She commands the dance. It is the ultimate in sensuality, power and release. It's an incredibly therapeutic action for women who feel they've compromised their sensual and sexual power. It's an amazing tool. Joni Lowe from Positive Energy for Women introduced the sexy fun of pole dancing to the *Today Show* teaches *Lap Dancing*.

I didn't just come up with this idea, I was shopping at Bedroom Matters in Westport, CT when Margaret mentioned I had missed the Lap Dance for Santa party the night before, bad timing on my part. But I did purchase Adult Mad Libs that were a hit at a Holiday party; you remember having to come up with a noun, adverb, and body part or adjective, now just a little more adult. They also sell Naughty Crossword Puzzle books, condom holders and so much more oriented towards the sensual side of woman. So get your glutes moving.

For those who want to have a piece of history and didn't grab a copy of the *New York Times* following the Election of Barack Obama, you can still buy the November 5, 2008 issue. It commemorates one of the most important events in American history -- Barack Obama's election as the 44th U.S. president. Preserve this important event with the actual *New York Times* newspaper on Nov. 5, 2008, which boldly reported Obama's decisive victory over John McCain. \$14.95 includes the full newspaper inside resealable plastic envelope. Newspapers are shipped FLAT in corrugated cardboard shippers to protect issue during transit. FREE Ground shipping within the Continental United States is included in the purchase price.

A CD of cool songs original acoustic-folk-rock from Kunkle and Harris: Bruce Kunkel (HuffPo's OffTheBus contributor) was a founding member and recording artist with the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. Rob Harris' group BlueGrass by Default performed throughout the San Francisco Bay area in the 1980's and 1990's.

From your library; A gift or donation in someone's name supporting your local, well loved library. Aside from spending quality time reading their free books, video's, DVD's & CD's (Bookstores are another source for reading & greeting your neighbors) they also have top notch resource and reference sites that will help you look for a new job if needed or keep you up to date with the world. With the downturn in the economy, the libraries are also squeezed with additional requests for materials and have become a destination for those needing information, an internet connection or a quiet place to think & read.

The Smithsonian, the American Peoples museum is another site of one of a kind, often hand made treasures from a Lapis Globe Paperweight \$25.00 to a Melted Numbers Watch, \$30.00, and this store has the wacky, the normal and everything in between. Any local museum, aquarium, historical society in your town, will have loads of locally focused items for sale that you can pick up at the last minute.

For the younger kids: *Beatrice's Goat*, paperback or hardcover, plus make a small donation to Heifer, to by a flock of chicks or ducks or bees to help a village, one family at a time. Small gift transforms young girl's life: Beatrice Biira of Uganda is one of Heifer's greatest success stories. At the age of nine, Beatrice achieved her lifelong dream of attending school thanks to a goat, a gift from Heifer International.

An education was a luxury in Beatrice's village, a remote place where families often struggled. But within three months of receiving their goat, Beatrice and her family had saved enough money from the sale of the goat's extra milk pay for her tuition.

A bright student, Beatrice eventually earned scholarships to attend school in the United States, where she went on to graduate from Connecticut College in May 2008. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in public service, with a focus in international development, from a U.S. graduate school.

Give to the hungry: Recently a major US Corporation located in New York City with thousands of employees made a Holiday donation of meals for the elderly in their employee's names, everyone wins!

So instead of asking "What's in your wallet?" save your card & lower your stress level and find other ways to give to your loved ones. They still love you.