

What will you be giving this holiday season?

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My early years included some special practices for our family holidays. Both at Thanksgiving and Christmas we reached out to share with others in special ways.

On Thanksgiving annually there was a midafternoon matinee of the Shrine Circus.

That performance was reserved for folks with special needs, most of whom lived in care institutions.

It was a time when orphanages housed children without families. There were many paralyzed victims of polio and other diseases who could not be adequately cared for at home with their families.

Our family helped push wheelchairs and carry supply packs into the great arena. We were treated to some of the best seats in the theater where clowns and other featured performers came to visit with us. Our parents prepared small snack packs safe for those who had difficulty swallowing to share during the performance.

Both on Thanksgiving and Christmas we routinely had one or two places at our big home table for a person who would be alone. Our lives were blessed with these special folks beyond the immediate family circle.

At Christmas, such guests always had a special small package to open and take with them. Many of the folks with whom we had shared Thanksgiving got a special small stuffed animal as a companion for their holidays and into the New Year as well. These early experiences helped “prime” my thinking about how secular and full of “things” our holidays have become. Black Friday, which probably should be “green” day, and, gift lists long and demanding never clicked for the season.

It has led to a practice as our grandchildren are maturing to select special gifts in support of needy causes in their names. We have sought to match their interests with the gifts, though this year we're providing them a chance to choose the gift destination.

As the season of holy and holidays ensue, I would challenge you to consider such an alternative approach for some of your giving. In addition, I want to lift up a special opportunity represented in the Comal County Conservation Alliance's Land Fund. This fund serves to assist and enable setting aside precious green space in our rapidly developing Hill Country domicile. Such a gift would touch the lives of many generations to come with green acres, wildlife habitat as well as wholesome fresh air and water.

As one neighbor recently put it when asked, "why bother saving natural areas and open spaces in Comal County?"

In reply, "Besides cleaning our air, providing oxygen, recharging our aquifers and providing habitat for wildlife, these special set aside areas reduce personal stress, reignite and energize our spirits and refresh our souls!"

Indeed, let's keep Comal Wild and take some walks together experiencing wholesome open spaces! Protecting this opportunity is what the Conservation Land Fund of CCCA seeks to assist in the immediate future. It's why this Land Fund is one of the options for our grands on this year's giving list!

As 2020 draws to a close, there are so many folks to thank for helping protect and preserve natural space! They work to set aside a few parcels of undeveloped land in this precious Hill Country setting where many wish to live. A host of those who volunteer many hours, give of their resources seeking to enlighten and inspire personal, nonprofit and public decisions are gently leading us toward this desirable future. These shared visions and efforts will help determine if acres get protected.

Thanks to the helpers and givers! (Information & donations
at www.comalconservation.org.)