

# GREEN TREE TIMES

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## Eat, Drink, Shop and Be Merry at Local Small Businesses this Holiday Season



Shopping locally this season can be both fun and helpful to the local economy.

The holiday season is a time of year when shopping takes center stage. While online giants and big box retailers seem to be everywhere, offering an endless array of products with the convenience of low prices, small businesses provide a range of benefits that go far beyond the ease

of a mouse click or mountains of merchandise. Shopping local retailers is more than just a transaction. It is crucial for maintaining the economic foundation of local communities. Let's take a look at the many ways it pays to shop small businesses during the holidays and all year long.

**Strengthen the local economy:** A large percentage of the money spent at small businesses stays in the community. That's because these businesses often are owned and operated by local residents who are invested in the community themselves. Various studies indicate that for every \$100 spent at a small business, roughly \$70 stays in the community.

**Enhanced customer service:** Owners and employees of small businesses have a keen interest in keeping customers happy. They often do so by providing superior customer service. Tailoring recommendations, exhibiting a willingness to accommodate special requests, offering a more engaging shopping experience, and being more friendly and connected with regular customers sets many small businesses apart.

**Support the community:** Small businesses serve the community through the products and services they offer, and many give back in other ways as well. Small, locally owned businesses often sponsor

schools, sports teams and charities. This helps foster a sense of belonging in the community.

**Innovative offerings:** Small businesses are not beholden to corporate policies or franchise restrictions, so they can more readily bring new life to existing ideas and trends. Small businesses can offer customers different options that larger retailers cannot match.

**Job creation:** Small businesses employ a significant percentage of the workforce and frequently provide jobs that might not be available in larger corporate settings. The U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy says small businesses have generated 12.9 million net new jobs over the past 25 years, accounting for two out of every three jobs added to the U.S. economy. Keeping residents working helps strengthen local communities.

There are numerous benefits to shopping at small businesses this holiday season and throughout the year.

## Fun Ways to Enjoy the Start of Winter Even on the Coldest Days

Winter begins on December 21 and ends on March 20. Many people lament the arrival of winter, perhaps thinking the colder temperatures and shorter hours of sunlight will compromise their chances to have fun. Even though particularly chilly thermostat readings or stormy conditions can hamper some plans, when people dig deeper they may find that even the coldest days present opportunities for enjoyment.

Spending time outdoors can help to improve mood just as much when the mercury drops as it can when temperatures are warm. Many mental health experts report that nature helps to generate positive emotions such as calmness, joy and creativity and also notes that connectedness with nature has been linked to lower levels of poor mental health, particularly depression and anxiety.

When winter begins, the following activities can make for an entertaining way to celebrate the arrival of the season.

Try building a fun and creative

snow sculpture. Use the first significant snowfall of the season to organize a snowman, snowwoman, or snow-animal-making event or contest. Waterproof gloves are a necessary piece of equipment, as are buckets for moving snow, shovels, carving and shaping tools (which can be plastic cutlery), and accessories to dress up the final product.

Search for some great snow covered hills and go sledding. This is a popular wintertime activity that doesn't require too much equipment. Sleds, plastic discs, and tubes can be purchased at sporting goods stores or toy stores. Sledders of all ages should consider wearing helmets to protect against injury if they will be traversing especially steep hills.

Encourage outdoor socializing and fun by hosting a winter block party. Many cities and towns across North America participate in WinterFest events, which run the gamut from food and craft festivals



to sporting events. Individuals can take cues from these type of activities and plan neighborhood festivals right on their streets. Neighbors can wheel out their fire pits or utilize outdoor propane heaters to keep spots cozy. Hot cocoa and cider stations and warm treats can keep everyone from feeling too cold. Electric slow cookers can keep everything from soups to chilis to stews warm and ready to eat.

Pull out your skate (or rent) and visit an ice rink. Whether a rink is indoors or outside, ice skating is a quintessential wintertime activity. Skaters of all skill levels can take to the ice and enjoy some exercise and laughs. Check out local rink schedules at North Park, South Park, Schenley Park and The UPMC Rink at PPG Place.

# MUSINGS... THANKFUL FOR THE LITTLE THINGS



tinest acknowledgement of how her contribution in a staff meeting had helped resolve a problem. I didn't remember writing it and don't think I wrote many in my years as a boss. The fact that it meant so much to her floored me.

### Little things

In this season of Thanksgiving, we are often encouraged to think about what we're thankful for. I like the practice and have known people for whom a regular gratitude list practice has been transformative.

For right now, at this moment in history, I think we could all benefit from thinking of the very small things in our lives that make us happy. Often they're free...the only cost being slowing down to notice them, to be fully present, to take them in.

Here are some little things that have brought me joy in the last week:

- found a lost sock
- made greeting cards with leaves and paint
- looked out at bright red leaves...maple in the back, oak leaf hydrangea in front
- found pictures of both my grandmothers as young women
- Walking the dog
- talked with an old friend who called out of the blue

I asked a couple of friends for little things that bring them joy. Here's some of what they said:

- The first sip of morning coffee
- Curling up with a good book
- A meaningful conversation with my spouse
- A morning walk when the sun's first light shines through trees

When we train our minds to focus not on what's missing but on what we already have, we feel better.

### Gratitude is contagious

A person who acknowledges the beauty of little things often radiates positive energy, encouraging others to do the same. When Marian shared with me how much my little card had meant to her, I began to be more mindful of acknowledging people's small, positive contributions.

When we find gratitude in the little things, we tap into an immense source of contentment. Life is filled with challenges, but it is also made up of a million small joys. Noticing these moments, being fully present for them, and cherishing them helps us realize that the texture of life is not only woven from grand milestones but also from the tiny, everyday threads. It is these threads, often unnoticed,

that make the fabric of our existence truly beautiful and complete.

And when you get really old, like me, you'll realize that many of these small moments were actually big.

### COACHING TIPS:

1. What little things/experiences bring you joy?
2. Be on the lookout for small moments to treasure today. Breathe into each one, saying, "Yes, this is one of those precious little moments for which I'm thankful."
3. Share your good energy with someone else.

**Note from the Publisher:** If you enjoy reading Musings, Sharon has gathered them together in a book, titled "Fresh Views on Resilient Living." It would make a great holiday gift! It's available on Amazon or you can scan the QR code to go to the link.



*Editor's Note: Sharon Eakes is a personal and executive coach, who is a regular columnist for our paper as well as for the Huffington Post. She is the author of Fresh Views on Resilient Living.*

*Enjoy the little things in life because one day you'll look back and realize they were the big things.*

~Kurt Vonnegut

When Marian retired, I had been her boss for 10 years. She came to say goodbye, clutching a small card. "You gave me this card 7 years ago," she said. "I've kept it in my desk drawer and looked at it every day. It kept me going." The note was the

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## Safeguard Against Holiday Health Hazards



Jayesh Gosai, M.D.

may be traveling with their own medication that could be left on guest room nightstands and bathroom vanities, within reach of children and teens. Designate a secure area or tray on a high dresser for guests to lay out their pill boxes and bottles. Give guests a special place to put their pocketbooks and bags (which may also contain pills and other medications) that is inaccessible.

### Shovel and Salt Traffic Areas.

Be sure to keep walkways clear of snow and ice to prevent injury from slips and falls. You should be in good physical condition before you tackle the walkway or driveway and always wait at least one hour after a meal. Avoid pulling your back by bending at the knees, keeping your back straight, tightening your stomach muscles, and lifting with your legs.

**Be Patient with Product Packaging.** Many holiday-related emergency room visits are a result of attempts to open difficult product packaging, such as clamshells and shrink-wrapped goods. While the process can be frustrating, take your time when opening packaging. If you're using scissors, cut with blades facing away from your body and hands. There are many specialty safety tools on the market.

**Prevent Fire and Burn Hazards.** Make sure your chimney is checked and swept before the holidays. Tossing wrapping paper into the fireplace poses a flash fire risk - split hardwood is the safest thing to burn. Never light candle near your holiday tree or where Kids and pets may be playing. Keep your tree away from any heat sources, like radiators and fireplaces, which will expedite the drying process. In the kitchen - be sure someone is present when cooking food stove top or in the oven. Always use burn proof oven gloves when placing or removing food from oven or stovetop.

Happy Holidays!



## TIPS TO AVOID HOLIDAY SCAMS



The holidays are a stressful time with lots going on. Don't fall for common scams while enjoying your holidays and add to your stress!



**Beware of Fake Shopping Sites:** Stick to well-known retailers & verify the website is secure by looking for "https" in the URL. Scammers often mimic popular online stores to steal personal & payment information.



**Look Out for Too-Good-to-be-True Deals:** Extreme discounts on hard-to-find items can be a red flag. Research the retailer/sellers to be sure you are buying from a reputable seller.



**Avoid Phishing Emails & Texts:** Do not click on unsolicited links in emails or text claiming to be from retailers or delivery companies. Instead, visit official websites to verify messages.



**Check QR Codes Carefully:** Scammers use fake QR codes for discounts or promotions. Only scan codes from trusted sources and verify linked websites for legitimacy.



**Be Wary of Refund Scams:** Scammers may send fake refund notices to trick you into providing personal information. Always verify refund requests through official retailer channels.



Always be wary when it involves payment or personal information. If it looks suspicious, be safe & contact the company directly to verify!

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## Community News and Events

Experience the true wonder of Christmas at **Unity Presbyterian Church's Festival of the Nativity** on Sat., Dec. 7, from 12p.m. - 5p.m.

**Auditions** will be held on Sat., Jan. 11 for the children's play **The Little Mermaid** at the studios of the **Carnegie Performing Arts Center**, 500 Chestnut Street in Carnegie. All parts are available, ages 5 - 18 audition at 2 p.m. Performances will be at the Andrew Carnegie Music Hall in Carnegie during the month of Feb.. Rehearsals will take place on Saturday afternoons. For more information please call 412-279-8887 or access the web site at [www.carnegieperformingartscenter.com](http://www.carnegieperformingartscenter.com).

**The Nutcracker**, an old fashioned holiday ballet performed annually by the **Carnegie Performing Arts Center**, will perform this year at the Pittsburgh Masonic Center, 3579 Masonic Way on Sat., Dec. 14 at 7 p.m. and Sun., Dec. 15 at 5 p.m. Info at (412) 279-8887 or [carnegieperformingartscenter.com](http://carnegieperformingartscenter.com).

# The Fishin' Hole



by Sam Hall

Tributaries they were absolutely desperate for it. Steelhead fishing has a dramatic effect on the local economy in Erie, Pennsylvania. The drought that kept so many fish out in the lake rather than running up into the streams that pour into the lake was keeping the anglers at home as well. In a normal year, the Steelhead fishery in Erie supports over 500 jobs in the county and produces nearly \$15,000,000 for the local economy. People travel to Erie from all over the world to fish for Steelhead. Each individual angler that goes to Erie to fish for Steelhead from outside of Erie County is estimated to spend over \$500 on their trip. October being so dry meant that many anglers stayed away. I spoke to a prominent bait shop in Erie, and they told me frankly, they felt their business had been cut in half for the entire month of October. They hope, and I believe, that the rain they got near the end of November is about to change their fortunes significantly.

Closer to home, many approved trout waters received a stocking of trout for the fall and people have been busy catching lots at Canonsburg Lake, in Washington County and Rac-

coon Lake, in Beaver County. I have had tremendous success with Striped Bass and Walleye in the Ohio River particularly early in the morning before the sun comes up and settles the fish down a bit. Pre-dawn hours though for more than a month have been incredible with shiners producing a bite with nearly every single cast until the sun rises.

I have also recently stepped into the 21st century in terms of my fishing boots. I have always preferred to wet wade when fishing and would push the limits of when that is appropriate by wading in way too cold water in shorts and sandals well into the fall or, early in the spring because I hated rubber or neoprene waders. They are so heavy and clunky, that I did everything to avoid them that I could. But, this November I made the investment of buying breathable waders for the first time in my life. They are so incredibly light and still keep me warm and dry. I am so happy, it is difficult to put it into words. Every time I put them on I am delighted by the investment. If you have never tried them, do so immediately! Get out there, get on those fish and keep those lines tight, send

you stories and pictures to [samdhall@comcast.net](mailto:samdhall@comcast.net).

Scan to watch my fishing videos



Catching walley while in my new boots! ~photo courtesy of Sam Hall

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# Fun and Games for Kids

(Answers on back page)



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ststephenpittsburgh.org  
412-279-5868  
Pastor Maurice C. Frontz III, STS  
Facebook.com/ststephenpittsburgh

## First Christian Church at Carnegie

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Anthony and Lydia Streets  
Carnegie, PA 15106  
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412-279-5030  
carnegiechristianchurch@gmail.com

## Saint Philip Parish

St. Philip Church, 50 W. Crafton Ave.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15205  
Ascension Church, 114 Berry St.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15205  
412-922-6300  
Rev. James R. Torquato, Pastor  
Call church for any service updates.

## United Presbyterian Church in Ingram

30 West Prospect Avenue  
412-921-2323  
Website: [ingramupchurch.org](http://ingramupchurch.org)  
Rev. Wayne D. Meyer

## 1<sup>st</sup> United Presbyterian Church of Crafton Heights

50 Stratmore Avenue  
412-921-6153  
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pastor@pittsburghbaptisttemple.com  
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Rev. Ray G. Cunningham, Pastor

## Church of the Nativity (Episcopal)

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[www.nativitychurch.org](http://www.nativitychurch.org)  
The Rev. Shawn Malarkey

## The Parish of St. Raphael the Archangel

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and Jim Mackin

## All Saints Polish National Catholic Church

500 Fifth Street, Carnegie  
412-276-2462 Fax: 412-276-9677  
[www.allsaintspnccpa.org](http://www.allsaintspnccpa.org)  
all.saints.pnc.church@verizon.net  
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Noblestown Shopping Center  
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Rev. Tom Ribar, Pastor

## Carnegie Primitive Methodist Church

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[carnegiepm.com](http://carnegiepm.com)  
412-207-2233  
Todd Pastorius, Pastor

## Church of the Atonement (Episcopal)

618 Washington Avenue, Carnegie,  
PA 15106  
412-279-1944  
The Rev. Ben Wright  
[www.atonementcarnegie.org](http://www.atonementcarnegie.org)  
[www.facebook.com/atonementcarnegie](http://www.facebook.com/atonementcarnegie)

## Crafton United Presbyterian Church

80 Bradford Avenue  
412-921-2293 Fax: 412-921-0348  
Sunday Worship - 11 a.m.  
Office: 9-1 p.m., T, Th, Fri  
Jin Kyung Ko, Pastor

## Hawthorne Avenue Presbyterian Church

90 Hawthorne Ave.,  
Crafton, PA 15205  
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Handicapped Accessible  
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[www.hawthornechurch.org](http://www.hawthornechurch.org)

## St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Jin Kyung Ko, Pastor

## Carnegie Presbyterian Church "New Hope Worship Center"

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Sunday School 9:30 a.m.  
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[www.carnegiepresby.org](http://www.carnegiepresby.org)

## Bible Baptist Church

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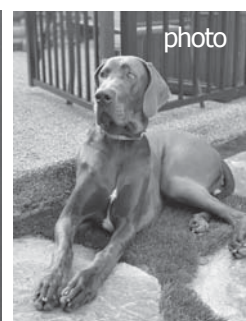
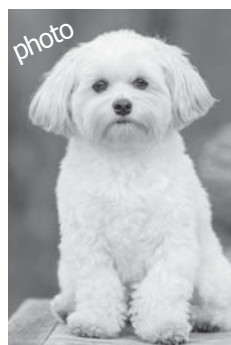


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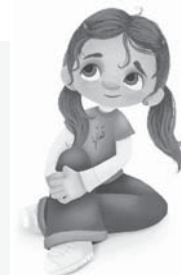
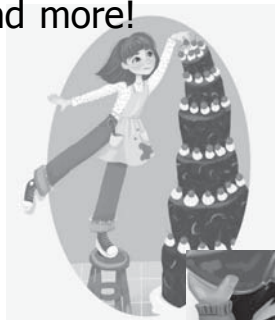
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