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# Holiday Guide

2025

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## Kid-friendly Thanksgiving crafts

Time before and after the Thanksgiving turkey can be hard to fill, especially for the youngsters. Here is a list of kid-friendly crafts that could make your celebration a little more colorful and a lot more memorable.

- Placemats (make ahead and laminate for Thanksgiving Day)
- Utilize an old mirror and have children write the menu with a water-based paint pen

- Paint rocks and add words of thanks (or spell out "thanks" on separate rocks)

- Fall bookmarks (cut out fall shapes on felt, glue to popsicle stick)

- Hand turkeys, traced (trace your hand, thumb is head, fingers are feathers)

- Handprint turkeys, (paint/inkpad your hand, press on paper, include free turkey poem at [www.thebensonstreet.com](http://www.thebensonstreet.com))

- Turkey treat bags (fill fingers of disposable glove with candy corn & Reese's Pieces, hand with popcorn, tie at bottom)

- Coloring pages of any kind (free at [www.coloringhub.com](http://www.coloringhub.com))

- Fall leaf bowls (inflate 12" balloon, put it upside down in bowl, apply leaves one at a time, coat with Mod Podge, repeat. Add rows until it is the depth you want. Let dry 3 hours, pop balloon.

Visit these resources for additional details and more ideas:

[www.countryliving.com/diy-crafts/g22626432/thanksgiving-crafts-for-kids/](http://www.countryliving.com/diy-crafts/g22626432/thanksgiving-crafts-for-kids/)

[www.thepioneerwoman.com/holidays-celebrations/g62785991/thanksgiving-kids-crafts/](http://www.thepioneerwoman.com/holidays-celebrations/g62785991/thanksgiving-kids-crafts/)

[www.delish.com/cooking/recipe-ideas/recipes/a56648/turkey-treat-bags-recipe/](http://www.delish.com/cooking/recipe-ideas/recipes/a56648/turkey-treat-bags-recipe/)

[www.mumsmakelists.com/thanksgiving-crafts-for-kids/](http://www.mumsmakelists.com/thanksgiving-crafts-for-kids/)

[www.thebensonstreet.com/thanksgiving-handprint-poem-printable-craft/](http://www.thebensonstreet.com/thanksgiving-handprint-poem-printable-craft/)



### Yarn Pumpkin Craft

This can be a bit messy but can produce adorable pumpkins.

**Materials:** Gather orange yarn, green pipe cleaners, 12" balloons, Aleene's Tacky Glue (combine with water 1:1)

**Instructions:** Blow up balloon halfway, cut yarn into 36" pieces, dunk yarn in 1/2 glue & 1/2 water mixture, wrap string around balloon for your desired coverage, hang balloon to dry for 24 hours.

When glue is dry, gently press balloon toward the center so as to release it from the yarn. Poke a hole near the knot to let air out slowly while you continue to push balloon gently away from yarn. When balloon is deflated, pull it out of center.

For more detailed directions, see <https://onelit-project.com/yarn-pumpkins/>

## Holiday Hosting 101: How to keep the holiday stress-free

The holiday season is meant to be a time of joy, connection, and celebration—but for many hosts, it can quickly turn into a whirlwind of to-do lists, last-minute shopping, and mounting pressure to make everything perfect.

Between coordinating schedules, planning menus, and keeping guests entertained, even the most festive spirit can start to feel overwhelmed. The good news? With a bit of organization, creativity, and realistic expectations (for yourself and for your guests), it's entirely possible to host a holiday event that's memorable for all the right reasons—without losing your peace of mind in the process.

Here are five tips to making the holiday (somewhat) stress-free:

- Plan early
- Keep menu and decorations simple, choose dishes you can prepare ahead of time
- Delegate as much as you can, ask guests to bring a dish (they often enjoy that)
- Remember to enjoy yourself, this is your event and you should enjoy it
- Remember what really matters

Remember, a stress-free celebration is the best gift you can give to your guests and to yourself. Enjoy!

## How to Address Grief at a Holiday Gathering

Sadly, friends and family members can pass away between holiday gatherings. If it is appropriate for your gathering, here are some ways to acknowledge loved ones who have died in the past year.

- **Display photos:** This can start conversations and remind everyone of their presence.
- **Share memories:** This can help people feel connected to the deceased and to each other.
- **Create new traditions:** Incorporate new traditions that honor loved ones who have passed.
- **Set boundaries:** Be aware of your own emotional well-being, specifically how you are processing your grief.
- **Ask for help:** The holidays can be difficult, especially after loss. If you need support, be sure to reach out to a professional.

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# Shop small

Spread a Christmas cheer with a perfect holiday outfit or a wonderful gift for your loved ones



# Style and a Smile

Create your best look at Apricot Lane

By JANE LEBAK

“Everyone has their own style,” says Marta McNulty, owner of Apricot Lane. “Your style is how you express yourself, and at Apricot Lane, I want everyone to discover theirs.”

Apricot Lane is a sweet boutique clothing shop tucked behind the Starbucks on Route 140 in Franklin. Although from the outside it seems like just another cute shop, a step inside unleashes a world of improbable diversity in a multitude of combinations.

“The key to customers is *customizing*,” says Marta. “Almost every piece in the shop can coordinate with every other piece, whether it’s chunky sweaters, barn jackets, stylish belts, or statement necklaces.” Bringing to bear her years of experience as a visual merchandiser for H&M and Bloomingdales, Marta jumpstarts your imagination with displays of sample outfits forged from the array of selections.

“This year, we’re highlighting

neutral colors,” she says. “Brown is the new black. From chocolate to beige to tan, we’re creating a homey, cozy feeling that’s going to have everyone looking forward to chilly afternoons and hot chocolate.”

Apricot Lane launched in 2022, when Marta decided to open a shop where she could hand select individual pieces, unlike franchises with a controlled inventory. As such, she’s able to source interesting brands with a smaller footprint but a more unique character. Marta says, “You’ll try on sweaters or blouses here that you cannot find anywhere else.”

With display racks made of gunmetal pipes, the shop is stark but warm--and packed with

Business  
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ideas. Marta maximizes her use of the space so customers are never overwhelmed, but rather encouraged and enticed.

Every rack reveals a new treasure, whether it’s a sweater so soft it’s like wearing a cloud (Dreamers by debut, if you’re curious), or comfortable loungewear from RD Style.

This season’s most interesting selections include sweaters and jackets with intricate details, like buttons, bows, or mixed media fabrications.

This fall, Marta is introducing ICHI, a Denmark brand. Their fashions embody playful authenticity and self-expression. ICHI’s skirts look like leather, feel like silk—and yes, have pockets. You can coordinate with a sweater from Dex that uses interesting stitch patterns to create a very forgiving fabric, then layer on a vegan suede coat or a trendy sherpa jacket. At Apricot Lane, it’s all about the coordination.

“We have a wide selection of denim. There’s Hidden, a versatile brand created to fit all attitudes and lifestyles. The jeans everyone talks about, though, are from Vervet,” says Marta. “They’re a stretchy denim that has customers rushing to the counter saying, ‘I have to have this.’”

Apricot Lane also carries Molly Bracken, a French brand that blends rock spirit with bohemian touches, and Another Love, which has the mission statement, “Love yourself and Another.” Dex from Canada provides refined wardrobe essentials, and B.Young showcases trendy femi-

nine styles from Denmark.

Also new in the store are limited luxe edition ankle boots by MIA.

“We’re about to launch our holiday lineup,” Marta says, “featuring sparkles, lacy tops, flowy satin-like or vegan leather miniskirts, and also metallic foil or vegan leather pants.”

To complete your outfit, Apricot Lane offers jewelry from Kendra Scott and Kinsey Designs. Best of all, though, is a specially curated collection of handmade jewelry by Comer Teng Studio, based right here in Franklin. “I am so proud to showcase Paulina’s heartfelt artwork,” says Marta.

The jewelry appeals in other ways. “Sometimes, customers will see a piece and just know it’s perfect for Christmas or a birthday gift.”

The shop also features exquisitely scented organic bath products, organic body wash sponges, and biodegradable, compostable face masks by ESW Beauty. At the counter, if you still need inspiration, you’ll find wristlet wallets and a selection of bag charms. “These are adorable,”

says Marta. “They take a product others may overlook, like a purse, and give it more of your personality.”

At every turn, Marta makes it easy to cultivate your personal style. In addition to all the suggested combinations, she’s created a comfortable sitting area where customers can sort and pair their selections, and you can give all these outfits a test run in the spacious changing rooms. If you’re stuck, Marta’s always available to make suggestions.

“Some customers want encouragement to stand out from the crowd and express themselves,” says Marta. “The idea is to look natural and feel natural by being who you are. That’s my delight, and it’s why I search for striking clothes that are off the beaten path.”

No two people are going to leave Apricot Lane with the same outfit because there are so many ways to combine the pieces.

Check out Apricot Lane’s fashions on Instagram and Facebook, under @ApricotLane-Franklin, or visit the shop at 342 East Central Street in Franklin.

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## Safe, neutral conversation starters

Holiday gatherings bring family and friends together, and that can often be great but sometimes it can be a challenge. To help avoid awkward silences or heated debates, consider these [hopefully] lighthearted, safe, and neutral conversation starters.

Be sure to choose carefully based on your audience.

- What's one thing you're most thankful for this year?
- What was one of your favorite personal memories from this past year?
- What's your funniest (or favorite) holiday memory?
- What's your favorite Thanksgiving (or holiday) dish—and who makes it best?
- Did anyone travel somewhere interesting recently?

- Have you seen any good movies or binge watched any shows lately?
- What's a book or podcast you've enjoyed recently?
- What's your favorite local event or place to visit during the holidays?
- If you could learn a new skill or hobby next year, what would it be?
- Have you heard any good "dad jokes" lately? (Lots of leads at [www.today.com/life/dad-jokes-rcna27325](http://www.today.com/life/dad-jokes-rcna27325)) And if there's a lull in the conversation, and someone has an iPhone, just say, "Hey Siri, tell me a Dad joke" - that's sure to make people laugh (or sigh and shake their heads).

### MISSED THIS SECTION?

Call Jen Schofield, 508-570-6544 or email: [jenschofield@localtownpages.com](mailto:jenschofield@localtownpages.com) for info on our December Holiday Guide.

## Practicing gratitude has health benefits, can increase happiness

Psychology Today reports that "practicing gratitude positively affects your physical and mental health."

Benefits include:

- Gratitude activates parts of our brain involved in emotions, causing a release of serotonin and dopamine.
- Practicing gratitude reduces risk factors for heart disease and improves immune function.
- Giving thanks is one of the most effective psychological interventions for those living with a mood disorder.

Tips for practicing gratitude include:

- Use a notebook or journal to write down something that went well for you daily.
- Next time you thank someone, focus on what you are thankful for.

- If you feel negative during the day, try redirecting your thoughts. When you feel frustrated, try shifting your focus to something positive about the situation.

- Share your gratitude by sending someone a note explaining why you are grateful for them. Try to practice this regularly.

To read the full article, visit <https://bit.ly/MentalHealthBenefitsGivingThanks>.

Harvard Medical School says, "giving thanks can make you happier" and suggests five ways to cultivate gratitude on a regular basis:

- Write a thank you note (or email). Make a habit of sending at least one gratitude letter a month.
- Thank someone mentally. It

may help just to think about someone who has done something nice for you.

- Keep a gratitude journal. Make a habit to write down (or share with a loved one) thoughts about the gifts you've received each day.
- Count your blessings. Reflect on what went right that week and what you are grateful for.
- Meditate. Mindfulness meditation involves focusing on the present moment without judgement; you can focus on a word or phrase ("peace") or a feeling (warm of the sun, a pleasant sound).

For the full list, and the science behind this partial list, visit <https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier>

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# Natick author gifts book proceeds to children's health program

By SANDY QUADROS BOWLES

In a season teeming with brightly packaged presents, children are the true treasure.

That is the message shared by Natick resident Lynn Carriker in her recently released children's book, "The Treasure."

"Children have been an inspiration to me," said the former elementary school educator and mother of three children and five grandchildren.

The story shares the journey of a child searching the woods for a treasure. The child encounters an array of wildlife, including eagles, owls and turtles.

The adventure ends with a wolf explaining that the treasure is within the child all along: "Your light is strong and can light up this whole world," the wolf tells the child.

"That's a treasure for sure."

Carriker hopes that message will resonate with children of all ages. "None of us can hear too

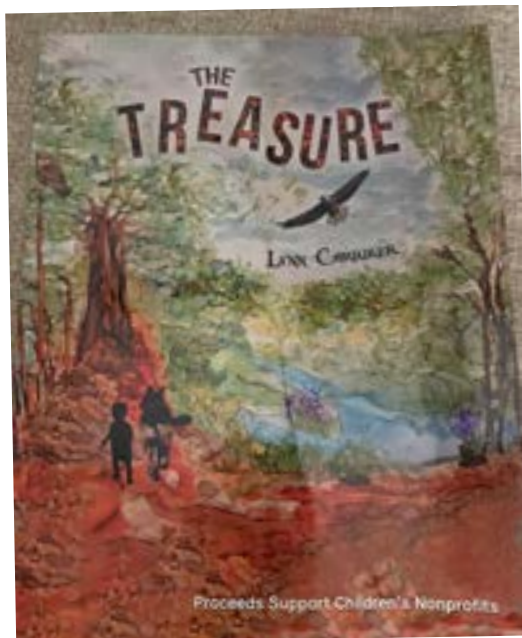
often how good and worthy we are," she said.

"It sends a message to the children, it affirms their essential goodness and their worth," she said. "Children need to hear that message."

She said she has received positive feedback from readers of all ages so far. "Parents have told me, I needed this book as a child."

The book shares not only a special message but also reflects a giving spirit. Proceeds from the book will benefit the PediPal Program at Good Shepherd Community Care.

The connection is personal for Carricker: The former palliative/end of life care nurse volunteers for the organization.



"The Treasure" shares a special message with children. Photo Sandy Quadros Bowles



Lynn Carriker with her husband Eric and son Matt, who perform back-up music to her readings. Photo courtesy Lynn Carriker

The PediPal program provides compassionate, primarily home-based care for children. The program, funded by the state through the Department of Public Health, is free to all participants.

Bryanna Tobin, pediatric program manager for Good Shepherd Community Care, describes Carricker's decision to donate the proceeds to that program as "such a generous, beautiful gift."

The book's emphasis on "the light and spark that exists within you ... that's a great message that encompasses what we do here."

PediPal works with the child's existing medical team to enhance conventional methods of care. The PediPal staff includes nurses, social workers, child life specialists, spiritual care providers and massage, art and music therapists.

These professionals work with families in myriad ways, bringing their individual talents and skills to assist families through the challenging journey.

Their work centers on a larger question, Tobin said.

"How can we help increase the quality of life for individuals? Quality of life is not one size fits all. Every person has different needs. We treat each person as an individual with individual needs."

Volunteers such as Carriker play a vital role, Tobin said. "I can't speak highly enough about how much of a difference it

makes to the family," she said of the volunteers who work closely with the children. "It takes a really special person."

Although the program is state-funded, the book's proceeds will assist with expenses that may not be covered in PediPal's budget, such as items for various family events that the program hosts, Tobin said.

This donation allows the program to "pour that money back into the families" and their care, Tobin said.

The book mirrors the program's emphasis on kindness and caring.

Tobin recalls telling her mother as a child that she wanted to change the world. Her mother responded, "Don't worry about changing the world, worry about changing the world for one person. Because when you change that person's life, you change their world."

Carriker expresses a similar sentiment. She hopes her book will remind readers that "they can make a difference in this world, and they will."

Carriker will read from "The Treasure" at 11:30 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 15 at the Tatnuck Bookseller, 18 Lyman St., Westborough. "The Treasure" can be purchased at Tatnuck Bookseller, Barnes & Noble in Natick and Bellingham, and on Amazon.com. Copies are also available in local libraries.

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# How to create simple holiday decor for your harvest table

While the harvest meal is the focus of the Thanksgiving gathering, the décor can be just as important in setting the tone of the event.

Setting a lovely table can often be done using items you already have around the house. Here are some ideas:



- Bring the outdoors in: Leaves, twigs/branches, pinecones, etc. Arrange these items in the center of the table (you could place them on a paper bag runner if you like).

- Fruit galore: Apples, oranges, pumpkins, etc. Use any fruits or veggies to add color to your table (stack them, scatter them, use them as name card holders, etc.).

- Mason jars or bottles/vases: Insert a tealight and tie twine or a strip of paper on the outside (you could write guest's names on the paper).

- Napkin ties: Wrap napkins (paper or cloth) with twine or ribbon and slip in a cinnamon stick or colorful leaf.

- Table runner: Add battery-powered twinkle lights to your chosen centerpiece design.

- Gratitude jar: Have a

gratitude jar at the front door. Have people write on slips what they are most grateful for (warn guests ahead of time so they can prepare), and read the

slips at dinner.

- Old family photos: Have photos of passed family members along a buffet or specific table. Add labels with names,

dates of birth/death, and interesting facts (or who to talk to for more information).



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# Holiday Happenings

## Friday, November 7

• The Bellingham Women of Today (BWOT) Third Annual Quarter Auction will kick off the holiday season on Friday, November 7th at the Bellingham Senior Center. Admission includes a set of auction paddles for just \$5.

Throughout the evening, guests will have the opportunity to browse display tables hosted by local vendors and crafters. Each vendor will contribute items for the quarter auction. In addition, there will be door prizes, raffles, and a variety of snacks and drinks available for purchase.

Doors open at 6:30 PM for paddle purchases, vendor and crafter displays, raffles, and the snack table. The auction and door prize drawings will begin at 7 p.m.

This event is a great opportunity to jumpstart your holiday shopping and support local businesses. Proceeds from the Quarter Auction will benefit BWOT's local charities and projects, including scholarships for Bellingham High School Seniors.

## Saturday, November 8

• 50th Annual Franklin Newcomers and Friends Craft Fair: The 50th annual Craft Fair is set for Saturday, November 8th at Tri-County High School in Franklin. The event runs from 9 a.m.- 3 p.m. at its original location in the lobby, hallways and cafeteria of Tri-County Regional Vocational Technical High School, located at 147 Pond Street. This popular and well-established juried craft fair features hand-crafted items from artists throughout New England. You'll find a great selection of items for your home, for gift-giving, specialty foods, and more. The entry fee is \$3 for people 12 years of age and older. The funds raised allow the Newcomers to give back generously to the local community. In addition, donations for the Franklin Food Pantry will be accepted at the entrance to the Craft Fair. Next year, the Rotary Club of Franklin MA will be taking over this event.

## Wednesday, November 12 -

### Thursday, December 18

• The Annual Norfolk County Registry of Deeds Food Drive will take place Wednesday, November 12 through Thursday, December 18. Donations of non-perishable food items can be dropped off at the Registry of Deeds, located at 649 High Street in Dedham, Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. A donation bin will be available in the lobby. Suggested items include canned goods, breakfast cereals, pasta, sauces, toiletries, and paper products.

## Saturday, November 15

• Holiday Craft Fair at May Center: 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.: The May Center School, One

Commerce Way, Norwood is hosting a festive gathering of local artisans and crafters showcasing their unique creations. If you're looking for handmade gifts, decorations or delicious treats, this craft fair promises something special for everyone. Admission \$3 at the door. All proceeds go to the May Center students for events and activities. For questions, call 508-588-8800.

## Sunday, November 16

• The Franklin Interfaith Council Thanksgiving Service will be held this year on Sunday, November 16, 2025, 7-8 p.m. at Franklin United Methodist Church, 82 W. Central Street, Franklin. At the end of 2024, Franklin houses of worship belonging to the Franklin Interfaith Council included: First Universalist Society in Franklin, Franklin Federated Church, Franklin United Methodist Church, New England Chapel, St. John's Episcopal Church, St. Mary's Parish Catholic Church, Temple Etz Chaim, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

## Friday, November 28 – Sunday, November 30

• The Bellingham Lions Club's Festive Lineup of Holiday Events will include: Santa Ride Around Town, Friday, November 28 – Sunday, November 30. Santa Claus will be making his way through Bellingham neighborhoods over three magical evenings. Families are encouraged to check the Lions Club's Facebook page for detailed route information.

## Saturday, November 29

• Medway Christmas Parade: The parade will kick off at 5:30 p.m. It will depart from Medway High School, travel through Medway, and finish at the Thayer House/Choate Park with concessions, photos with Santa & Mrs. Claus, lighting of the town's Christmas lights at Choate Park, and a fireworks display.

Contact the Medway Christmas Parade Committee for parade entries or any questions at [christmasparade@medwayma.gov](mailto:christmasparade@medwayma.gov) or call 774-277-5630.

• Holliston's 19th Annual Holiday Stroll will take place from 12-6 p.m. on Saturday, November 29. Trolleys will run from 1-6 p.m. throughout downtown areas, with guaranteed stops: Historical Society (12-4 p.m.), 547 Washington St., Mt. Hollis Lodge (Masonic Hall) 657 Washington St., Blair Square, Rail Trail, Upper Charles Rail Trail, Holliston.

Celebrate Holliston's Chili contest will take place at Mt. Hollis Lodge, with Giving Trees and Local Nonprofit-decorated Trees at Blair Square, which will be the site of the annual tree lighting by Holliston Lions at 4:15. Carolers and Girl Scouts will help

Santa count down to the tree lighting. For more information, visit <https://www.cel-ebtrateholliston.com/stroll.html>.

## Sunday, November 30

• Holiday Lighting: 3-5 p.m. - Join the Natick Recreation and Parks Department for its annual Holiday Lighting Festival on the Natick Common. Enjoy free crafts and caroling. Catch the Santa Parade, courtesy of the Natick Fire Department: 2:30-5 p.m. He will stop at each elementary school to visit on his way to the tree lighting!

• Holiday on the Hill: Join the Norfolk Lions for our annual Holiday on the Hill Christmas tree decorating contest! Get a tree, pick a theme, and decorate! Your \$40 entry fee gets you a tree and a power connection along Main St. Trees will be "revealed" when the Santa Parade ends on Town Hill. The parade and contest will take place on November 30th. Trees can be decorated on Saturday the 29th or Sunday by 3:00pm. Parade goers can vote for their favorite tree that day or in the library through the following week. Anyone can enter! Winners receive a prize! The trees can remain on display through Christmas for the whole town to enjoy. Businesses can incorporate advertising into their tree. Please secure all decorations so they last through the contest. Go to [norfolkmalions.org](http://norfolkmalions.org) for more information and to register.

## December

• Annual Holiday House Decorating Contest Throughout December: Get ready to light up the town! Residents are encouraged to participate in the annual Holiday House Decorating Contest. Judging will take place in December, with winners announced later in the month. Full details will be available on the Bellingham Lions Club Facebook page.

## Thursday, December 4

• Dean College's Holiday Lighting Ceremony: Every year, Dean College welcomes the Franklin community to witness the annual holiday lighting on its lawn on Awpie Way. This year's event will take place on December 4th and includes holiday entertainment and performances by Dean students. Holiday lightings will include a Christmas Tree, A Menorah, and a Kwanzaa Kinara.

## Friday, December 5

• Exsultet! A Celebration of Voices will hold two December concerts, the first to take place on Friday, December 5, 2025, at 7:30 p.m. at the Christ Lutheran Church, 113 Union St., Natick, and the second on Sunday, December 7, at 2 p.m. at the First Congregational Church, 725 Washington St., Holliston. Tickets are \$20 for general admis-

sion, \$15 for students and seniors, and free for children aged 12 and under. Visit [www.exsultet.us](http://www.exsultet.us) for more information.

## Saturday, December 6

• St. Blaise Parish Island of Misfit Toys Fair, at St. Blaise Church, 1158 S. Main St., Bellingham, will take place on December 6, from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. The fair feature a Country Store, with baubles and other unique crafts created by the Holy Crafters, St. Blaise parishioners, who, like Santa's elves, work throughout the year to create items to sell at the annual event. This holiday bazaar will also feature a craft table with handmade Christmas decor, tree ornaments, and water bottle holders, to name a few. There will be games for adults and kids, great food from the Cafe which will be open 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and homemade sweet treats from the Country Bake Shop. There will be several raffles going on throughout the day.

• Franklin LGBTQ Alliance Friendsgiving will take place Thursday, November 6th from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Franklin TV and Radio, 23 Hutchinson St., Franklin. Join us as we have our very own friendsgiving! If you would like to bring a side dish or dessert, please bring an ingredient list due to food allergies.

• Annual Jolly Holly Fair! This longtime tradition of more than 70 years is sure to help you find the right gift for anyone on your list! We have many local artisans and vendors, needlework, Silent Auction, crafts, food, and much more! We also have Pictures with Santa, and face painting! We hope to see you there! Saturday, December 6. 9am-2pm Millis Church of Christ, 142 Exchange St. Millis, MA.

• Hopedale Winter Stroll & Shop Hop: 12-7 p.m.

The 14th Annual Hopedale Winter Stroll and Shop Hop takes place at many stops along Hopedale Street and Dutcher Street including many historic buildings such as the Draper Gym, Hopedale Community House, Bancroft Memorial Library, Hopedale Unitarian Church, Union Evangelical Church and the Little Red Shop Museum. Grab a drink from the mobile Irish pub and a meal from one of our food trucks or Hopedale restaurants and then shop multiple vendor locations that will showcase work from local vintage vendors, hand makers, artisans, food vendors and mobile shops. Many businesses across Hopedale will take part in the Stroll and Shop Hop with special offers for customers. Hop on the shuttle bus and visit them! All of this ending in the long standing and popular town tradition of the tree lighting and Santa visit at the Hopedale Community House. Check out our website for more information and to see pictures of previous years! <https://friendsofhistorichopedale.com/winter-stroll>

• St. John's Church Christmas Fair is set

for Saturday, December 6, from 9 am to 2 pm at 237 Pleasant Street, Franklin. Do your holiday shopping in one stop: Buy gift cards from popular restaurants and stores; silent auction and raffle items. Check out gift baskets with themes like sports; spa, health and wellness, and pet items. Give the gift of food, wine, coffees, or teas. Appreciate unique, hand-made crafts? You'll love the beautiful fresh wreaths and greens, as well as cozy scarves, mittens, and hats. Choose delicious treats like cookies, fudge and other baked goods at the Cookie Walk. Snacks and drinks can be purchased during the fair.

For more information: Facebook at St John's Episcopal Church, [www.stjohns-franklinma.org](http://www.stjohns-franklinma.org) or call 508-528-2387

• United Parish Holiday Bazaar: 1- 3 p.m. 1 Church Street, Upton

• Hopkinton Holiday Stroll: 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.: It will be a great way to get all of your shopping done and have a fantastic time doing it. Go from store to store by foot or cover much more mileage by using your own vehicle. Take a ride on a horse drawn carriage around the Common, watch the ice sculpture creation and stay for the annual Tree lighting on the Hopkinton Town Common that evening.

## Sunday, December 7

• The annual Holliston Lions' Breakfast with Santa will be held on Sunday, December 7, 2025, from 8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the Placentino-Miller School Cafetorium, 235 Woodland St., Holliston. This event, which has been held for over 25 years, will include breakfast, photos with Santa (\$5, or \$4 with a donation for the food pantry), and entertainment on stage provided by local dance academies and troops, and the Holliston High School Performing Arts band and chorus. Donations for the Holliston Pantry Shelf and Toys for Tots will be accepted, and any proceeds will benefit Holliston Music and Arts Parents Association, the Food Pantry, and other local charitable needs. Children under 2 eat free, and breakfast is \$8 for those ages 2-11 and \$12 for those 12 and older. The event is supported by local businesses, including Garelick Farms, Holliston Superette, and Fiske's.

## Wednesday, December 31

• The Friends of Natick Trails is planning the fifth Cochituate Rail Trail on New Year's Eve event on Wednesday, Dec. 31 from 4:30-7:30 p.m.

Activities will include entertainment, fire pits, a photo booth, festive lighting, food and beverages, and other attractions.

# Books Change Lives. Give the Gift That Keeps Giving.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY DEBRA HORAN, OWNER OF BOOK-LOVERS' GOURMET IN WEBSTER

Books are timeless gifts. They show thoughtfulness, cater to a person's interests, and can be cherished for years. Whether it's a gripping novel, an inspiring memoir, a beautiful coffee table book, or a guide to a new hobby, there's something for everyone.

The holiday season is always packed with major new releases—perfect timing for gift-giving (or treating yourself). Big-name authors often schedule their books for fall to catch the holiday rush, and 2025 is no exception.

Here are a few trends and types of blockbuster releases to watch for:

## Bestselling Series Finales or Sequels

If someone's into fantasy, thrillers, or romance series, chances are a hotly anticipated sequel or finale just dropped.

## Celebrity Memoirs

There's usually at least one high-profile memoir everyone's talking about. Great for fans of pop culture or inspirational reads.

## Holiday-Themed Rom-Coms

Cozy, festive, and feel-good, these are always popular gifts.

**Award-Buzz Titles** – Books getting Booker, National Book Award, or Pulitzer buzz make thoughtful and literary gifts.

## Crossover YA Hits

Young adult novels with crossover appeal (think *The Hunger Games* or *Fourth Wing*) make great gifts for teens and adults alike.

## Here are some specific titles we'd like to highlight for you:

*The Gift of Words* (a Holiday Picture Book) by Peter Reynolds is a perfect solution when positive words prove hard to come by in his bustling town, Jerome shares holiday wishes with his community by stringing joyful words on a tree.

*Finding My Way: A Memoir* is the newest inspiring book by Malala Yousafzai, the youngest Nobel Peace Prize laureate and New York Times bestselling author of *I Am Malala*. She shares the most private journey of her young life - a story of friendship

and first love, of mental illness and self-discovery, and of trying to stay true to yourself when everyone wants to tell you who you are.

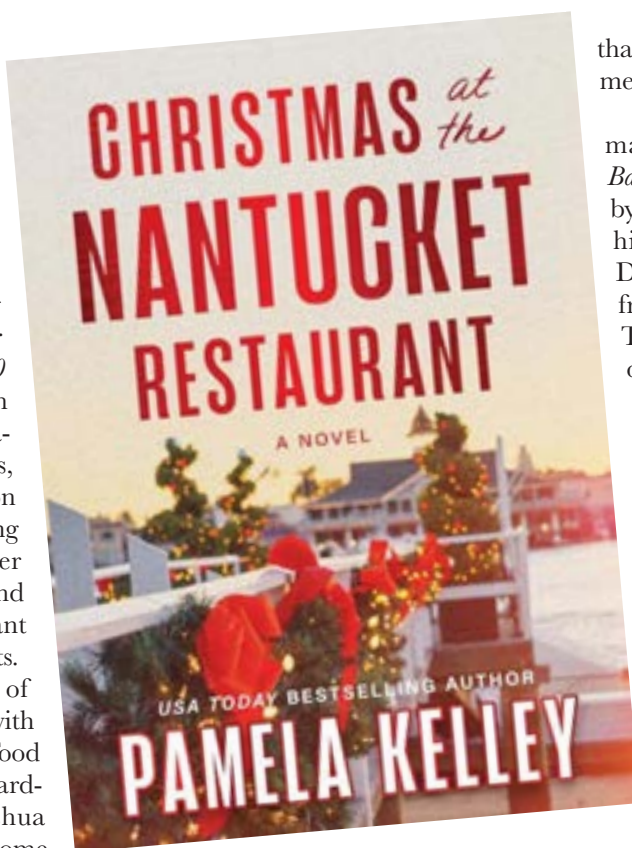
Looking toward the sweet side, *Baking and the Meaning of Life: How to Find Joy in 100 Recipes* by Helen Goh not only shares her favorite baking recipes, but also reflections on life, sharing how baking can bring us together and add meaning and joy to both significant and everyday moments.

In *Six Seasons of Pasta: A New Way with Everyone's Favorite Food* by James Beard Award-winning author Joshua McFadden teaches home cooks how to use store-bought dried pasta to create seasonal, restaurant-quality dishes at home.

More holiday fun ensues with *Extremely Happy Holidays: Wildly Creative New Cocktails to Uplift and Enchant Through a Full Year of Holiday Chaos* by Devin McEwan with illustrations by Sandra Boynton. What better way to honor and enjoy all the holidays of a year than to toast each one with a fabulous new cocktail? This exuberant little book takes you from New Year's Day all the way to New Year's Eve, with stops along the way at the other festive holidays of the year.

If getting back to nature is your vibe, *The Forest Revealed: An Illustrated Year* showcases the beautiful art of Jada Fitch with text by Kateri Kosek. Twelve stunning paintings represent the forest during one month of the year, featuring an array of animals, plants, insects, fungi, and other creatures common during those weeks. Opposite each painting is a list of all the species depicted, with corresponding numbers in the art, creating a search-and-find experience that will keep readers of all ages discovering more every time they look.

*How to Love a Forest: The Bittersweet Work of Tending a Changing World* by Ethan Tapper is a tender and fearless reimagining of what it means to care for for-



than to harm? What does it mean to truly love a forest?"

How about a cozy romance? *The Gingerbread Bakery* (Dream Harbor #5) by Laurie Gilmore is the highly anticipated new Dream Harbor romance from the #1 New York Times bestselling author of *The Pumpkin Spice Café!*

*Christmas at the Nantucket Restaurant* by Pamela Kelley invites readers to experience the warm glow of family, friends, and festivities this Christmas. A perfect pick for fans of Elin Hilderbrand, Debbie Macomber, and Hallmark Christmas movies. Come spend the holidays on Nantucket!

Advent calendars are a fun, creative way to count down the days til Christmas for any age. Celebrate the holidays and your feline friends with *Merry Catmas! Cat Lover's Advent: 25 Days of Purrfect Surprises for You and Your*

*Cat*, a calendar loaded with fun surprises for both you and your cat. From patches to keychains, magnets, cat toys, and more, this advent calendar is a delightful way to include your cat in your holiday fun.

*Joy to the Whole World!: A Round the World Christmas Lift-The-Flap Book* covers traditional Christmas foods, decorations, and symbols of ten different countries.

*Little People, Big Dreams: Advent Calendar Book Collection* has 24 mini books from the iconic Little People, BIG DREAMS series. Inside each envelope, children will find stories about inspirational people from across the world, from trailblazing musician Harry Styles and eco hero David Attenborough, to freedom-fighter Rosa Parks.

There are plenty of options for giving books that will be treasured throughout the year. Browse around your local bookstore for even more tailored suggestions and ideas. Happy reading!!

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# America's Most Popular Pies

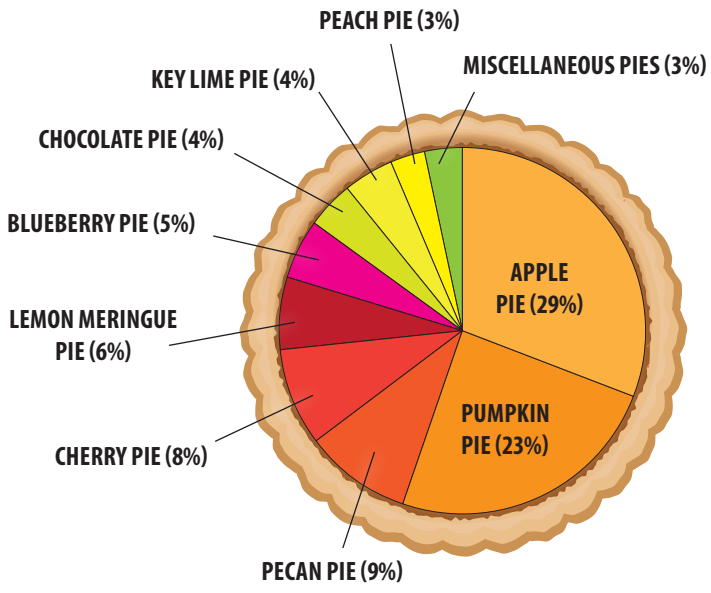
It will likely come as no surprise that America's favorite pie, according to Better Homes & Gardens, is the apple pie ... except around Thanksgiving when the top spot goes to the pumpkin pie.

And Reader's Digest says that, "If you ask people along the West Coast and in Florida, they'll tell you that pumpkin pie is the best all year round, despite its reputation as a fall favorite. Throughout the Midwest and as far as Arizona, cherry pie is the most popular variety. However, throughout the South, pecan pie is the undeniable favorite, with fans of the nutty confection spanning from North Carolina to Texas."

It goes on to say that pumpkin pie does not top the list of favorites on the East Coast.

"The most fascinating region is the East Coast, where several pies are neck and neck for the title of top dog. The most popular pies along the eastern seaboard include key lime, lemon meringue, chocolate and blue-

**"Pie Chart:" According to Better Homes & Gardens citing Instacart data from March 2025, America's top pies include:**



Source: [www.bhg.com/instacart-most-popular-pies-in-america-2025-11696220](http://www.bhg.com/instacart-most-popular-pies-in-america-2025-11696220)

berry pie, which is particularly beloved in New England."

Some have disputed the claim that pumpkin (or apple, for that matter) pie does not top the list

of East Coast favorites, so this newspaper is taking its own poll.

Which is your favorite pie: apple, pumpkin, pecan, cherry, lemon meringue, blueberry, chocolate,

key lime, peach, or something else? Comment on our Facebook page.

Source: [www.bhg.com/insta-](http://www.bhg.com/insta-)

[cart-most-popular-pies-in-america-2025-11696220](http://cart-most-popular-pies-in-america-2025-11696220)

[www.rd.com/article/most-popular-pie-in-america/](http://www.rd.com/article/most-popular-pie-in-america/)

## Fun Facts About Pumpkins

What do we know about pumpkins? They're cute, they come in different sizes and colors, and they're essential to our fall holidays. But here are some fun facts you might not know.

According to the Farmers' Almanac:

The word 'pumpkin' comes from the Greek word, pepon, which means a "large melon."

Pumpkins originated in Central America.

Pumpkins are actually a fruit.

Pumpkin is also a squash, a member of Curcubita family.

The yellow-orange flowers that bloom on the pumpkin vine are edible.

Pumpkin seeds taste great roasted and contain medicinal properties.

Native Americans grew and ate pumpkins and their seeds long before the Pilgrims reached this continent. Pilgrims learned how



to grow and prepare pumpkins from the Native Americans.

Pumpkin was most likely served at the first Thanksgiving feast celebrated by the Pilgrims and the Native Americans in 1621.

The earliest pumpkin pie made in America was quite different than the pumpkin pie we enjoy today. Pilgrims and early settlers made pumpkin pie by hollowing out a pumpkin, filling the shell with milk, honey and spices, and baking it.

Early settlers dried pumpkins shells, cut it into strips, and wove it into mats.

Pumpkin has been prepared in a variety of ways from soups to stews to desserts since the immigration of the first European settlers.

The 'Pumpkin Capital of the World' is Morton, Illinois. Home of Libby's pumpkin industry; they started selling canned pumpkin in 1929.

The state of Illinois grows the most pumpkins. It harvests about 12,300 acres of pumpkins annually.

The latest U.S. record (2019) for the largest pumpkin ever grown weighed in at 2,517.5 pounds by Karl Haist of Clarence Center, New York (near Buffalo).

Pumpkins were once considered a remedy for freckles and snakebites.

Natural medicine practitioners have proven that consuming pumpkin seeds reduces the risk of prostate disorders in men.

Source: [www.farmersalmanac.com/little-known-pumpkin-facts](http://www.farmersalmanac.com/little-known-pumpkin-facts)

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# Local Town Pages teams up with MyFM's "Toys From The Heart" campaign

**Together, we can support every local holiday toy drive this season!**

MyFM 101.3 and Local Town Pages both serve "The Heart of It All," the same tight-knit communities, from Milford to Franklin, Bellingham to Uxbridge, and beyond. That's why Local Town Pages is proud to partner with MyFM 101.3 in its Toys From The Heart initiative, to ensure no child in our community goes without joy this holiday season. This heartfelt campaign aims to spread the word about every toy drive within our collective broadcast and print reach.

"It's not about just one campaign — it's about lifting them all up, together," says Tom McAuliffe, President and Owner of MyFM Media. For decades, MyFM has been at the center of holiday giving traditions — from its own "Stuff a Bus" drive to partnerships with the Salvation Army, police departments, and dozens of local nonprofits.

At times, however, MyFM's toy drives felt, to McAuliffe, as if they were competing with other organizations that didn't have the same resources.

"I don't want to compete with anybody," says McAuliffe, "Our talent is helping to promote things. Rather than us putting on our own toy drive, why don't we use our platform, our website, our airwaves, our different connections, to promote all toy drives? Everybody wins!"

Toys From The Heart will amplify and unite all toy drives in the region under one umbrella, providing on-air promotion, digital coverage, live interviews, on-site broadcasts, and now, through this partnership, print media.

"Local Town Pages is more than a newspaper—it's a voice for our communities, a way to stay connected," says Jennifer Schofield, President and Co-

owner of Our Town Publishing, who reached out to McAuliffe when she learned of his plan. "Combining forces with MyFM's Toys From The Heart allows us to drive that message home. As a new business owner, I feel a responsibility to use my resources to champion causes that make a difference. It's so important to get this information out there across all platforms, so every toy drive is fully supported, and no family is left without."

The program will feature a dedicated Toys From The Heart webpage on MyFMToday.com listing all participating toy drives, daily reminders on-air, social media highlights, weekly email updates, and appearances by the MyFM team at local collection events. Local Town Pages, through its holiday guide, will further promote those neighborhood initiatives and drive traffic



to the MyFM website.

Please see our ad below for a list of local toy drives happening this holiday season!

Don't see your toy drive? To be included in our December listing, please contact [jenschofield@localtownpages.com](mailto:jenschofield@localtownpages.com)



**TEAMS UP WITH**





## "Toys From the Heart"

**Campaign to Support Every Local Holiday Toy Drive this Season!**

**Toys From the Heart, a new community-wide initiative designed to support every holiday toy drive across the MyFM & Local Town Pages market area, better known as "The Heart of It All"**

**From Milford to Franklin, Bellingham to Uxbridge, and beyond, MyFM Media 101.3 & Local Town Pages are uniting local efforts to ensure no child goes without joy this holiday season.**

BELOW IS A PARTIAL LISTING OF ALL TOY DRIVES HAPPENING THIS HOLIDAY SEASON!

- Milford Police Association Toy Drive
- Salvation Army Milford Corps Holiday Assistance
- Santa's Porch Hopedale
- Franklin Police Holiday Toy Drive
- The Santa Foundation (Franklin)
- HPD Fill-a-Cruiser (Holliston PD)
- Ashland PD Toy Collections (Ashland PD)
- Hopkinton PD Toy Collections (Hopkinton PD)

- BPD Fill-a-Cruiser (Bellingham PD)
- In Pursuit of Presents (Medway Police Assoc. & PD)
- Stuff a Cruiser (Mendon Police Assoc. & PD)
- UPD Toy Collections (Upton PD)
- Firefighters Toy Drive (Uxbridge Fire Dept. Fire Chief)
- Firefighters Toy Drive (Uxbridge Fire Dept. Deputy Chief)
- Fill-a-Cruiser (Northbridge PD)
- Free Holiday Store (Westboro Rotary + WYFS)

- Free Holiday Store (Westboro Youth & Family Services)
- Winter Wishes/Giving (Southboro Youth & Family Services)
- Wrentham PD Toy Drive (Wrentham PD)
- Norfolk Lions Toy Drive
- Blackstone PD Toy Drive (Blackstone PD)
- Millis Police/Fire Toy Drive
- Framingham PD Toy Drive (Framingham PD)
- Timothy's Toy Box (Framingham)











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