Last Minute Holiday Deals

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Health, Wealth, Happiness & Spirit

Where and How to Produce the Perfect Gifts on a Budget

Women's Empowerment

Highlighting Entrepreneurship and Supporting Local Businesses

Media & Book Reviews Castlevania: Nocturne and The Ocean at The End of the Lane

Adopting a New Pet

Some Points to Consider when Bringing in a New Furry Friend

December 2023



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Our Mission

Your Bliss Magazine explores the power of overall wellness. We look to push past the boundaries of physical health and explore the aspects of mental health, financial health, and health of the spirit. Our goal is to bring you information that you can use to live a happy, healthy, and spirited life. We find tips for the short term as well as more expansive information for the long term.

With the ever-expanding technology, knowledge, and evolution of the health field, there is a growing supply of data to take from. With Your Bliss, we find the information for you and put it all in one place. Every month we bring you new articles on a wide range of topics so you can live a more fulfilled and whole life.

Table of Contents

4 Last Minute Holiday Shopping
5 DIY Christmas Card Craft
7 Empowering Through Collaboration
8 National Handwashing Awareness Week
10 What to Consider when Adopting a Pet
11 Business Tips with Faizan Haq
12 Media Review: Castlevania: Nocturne
13 Book Review: The Ocean at the End of the Lane
14 Recipe of the Month
15 Coloring Corner

Deck the Halls Without Breaking the Bank

By: Gabrielle Guzsinski



The holiday season is a time for joy, celebration, and creating lasting memories with loved ones. However, the merriment often comes with a hefty price tag. Fear not! With a strategic holiday budget, you can navigate the season's festivities without breaking the bank. Here are some useful and practical tips to keep your holiday spending in check, ensuring a joyful celebration without the financial hangover.

Thoughtful and meaningful gifts don't have to come with a hefty price tag. Consider embracing the do-ityourself (DIY) approach by creating personalized gifts. Handmade crafts, baked goods, or a heartfelt letter can convey genuine sentiment without breaking the bank. Not only does this save you money, but it also adds a personal touch to your presents. Not to mention, thrift stores are treasure troves of holiday gems. Thrifting extends beyond purchasing; it's an invitation to embark on creative adventures. Picture frames, vintage books, and miscellaneous treasures can become the raw materials for your DIY dreams. With a touch of creativity, transform thrifted items into personalized holiday masterpieces. Reduce, reuse, and rock the holidays with eco-friendly elegance.

Hosting festive gatherings often involves a significant expenditure on food and beverages. Opt for a potluckstyle approach where each guest contributes a dish. This not only distributes the financial responsibility but also adds a diverse array of homemade dishes to the table. It's a win-win situation that allows for joyful celebrations without straining your budget. This egalitarian approach ensures that no one feels pressured to overspend, creating an inclusive atmosphere. This not only eases the strain on

your budget but also fosters a sense of communal responsibility, enhancing the collaborative spirit of the festivities. With the culinary load distributed among guests, the host can focus on creating a welcoming ambiance, organizing activities, and enjoying the festivities alongside everyone else.

Keep an eye out for holiday sales, discounts, and promotions. Black Friday and Cyber Monday are prime opportunities to score deals on gifts and decorations. Plan your shopping around these events to maximize your savings. Utilize online tools and apps that track price drops and notify you when items on your wish list go on sale. For example, Rakuten offers cashback and coupons for a wide range of online retailers. Users can earn cashback on purchases, which is paid out quarterly. Install the Rakuten browser extension to automatically activate cashback offers when you visit a supported website.

With the convenience of online shopping, one can avoid the crowds and chaos associated with brick-andmortar stores during these sales events. This approach aligns with the need for efficiency, allowing you to make purchases from the comfort of your home.

This holiday season, enjoying a festive holiday season is within reach without sacrificing your financial wellbeing. Let your budget be your guide to a stress-free and enjoyable celebration. By defining your priorities, setting a realistic budget, and embracing thoughtful giving, you can create lasting memories without the worry of overspending. May your holidays be filled with the warmth, laughter, and the joy of smart financial choices.





Ornaments

- 1. Cut out three circles, three small squares and three long narrow rectangles.
- 2. Glue your long rectangles, starting at the top of the card,



DIY Christmas Cards

Three simple and fun ways to personalize your cards

What you will need:

- 1. A glue stick
- 2. Scissors
- 3. Festive patterned paper or construction paper

Christmas Tree

1. Cut three triangles, at slightly different sizes and a rectangle. 2. Glue the rectangle (trunk) down first.

3. Once dry, glue the triangles starting at the bottom working up to the top. With the largest on bottom and smallest on top. Overlapping them like shown to the left.

going down to where you want your ornament to start. 3. Then, glue the squares to the bottom of the long rectangles.

4. Lastly, glue the ornaments onto the bottom of the squares.



Wrapped Gift

1. Cut out one square, one narrow rectangle that is the same height as your square, two small ovals and one small circle.

2. Glue down your square to start.

3. Position your narrow rectangle centered over the square, then glue the rectangle in place.

4. Now at the top center of your square, position and glue down your two ovals next to each other as seen to the left.

5. Lastly, glue on on top/in the center of the two ovals your small circle.

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Empowering Through Collaboration By: Lana Shapiro



In a world that constantly evolves, one truth remains evident: women supporting women not only fosters individual growth but also creates a formidable force capable of overcoming challenges and achieving remarkable success. The power of collaboration among women extends across various spheres, from the professional realm to personal relationships, breaking barriers and building bridges toward a more empowered future.

I was fortunate enough to experience the power of this type of collaboration recently when I hosted a collaborative open house at my place of business with five local women-owned service-based businesses.

Witnessing strong women coming together, developing relationships with each other and offering complimentary services to our community has inspired me to continue putting together these types of events more frequently and resulted in the words that follow.

At the heart of women supporting women lies the concept of building strong, interconnected networks. Whether in the workplace, community, or social circles, women coming together can create a support system that amplifies their voices and bolsters their endeavors. This collaborative approach opens doors to diverse perspectives, skills, and experiences, fostering an environment where everyone can thrive.

By supporting each other's ambitions and accomplishments, women can collectively shatter

The Strength of Women Supporting Women

societal barriers, paving the way for future generations of female leaders. This united front challenges preconceived notions, demanding recognition based on merit rather than gender.

In a world where mentorship is invaluable, women supporting women creates a natural platform for mentorship and guidance. Seasoned professionals can share their insights and experiences, offering a roadmap for younger women navigating their careers. This transfer of knowledge creates a cycle of empowerment, ensuring that wisdom and lessons learned are passed down to empower the next wave of women leaders.

> embraces diversity, and women supporting women actively contributes to a more inclusive world. By recognizing and celebrating differences, women can create environments where everyone feels valued and heard. This inclusivity not only benefits women but also contributes to a richer, more dynamic society that appreciates the strengths that come from diverse perspectives.

> > Your Bliss • 7

Collaboration inherently

In the realm of entrepreneurship, the power of collaboration becomes a driving force for success. Women-led businesses can thrive when they share resources, skills, and support. Collaborative efforts in entrepreneurship not only contribute to economic growth but also serve as an inspiration for aspiring female entrepreneurs, demonstrating that success is achievable through mutual support and shared knowledge.

National Handwashing Awareness Week

By: Sue Perbody



National Handwashing Awareness Week is December 6-12, and it is crucial to remember this simple step. With colds, flus, and various Covid-19 variants, washing your hands is one simple way to keep you and your loved ones safe. This event seeks to bring attention to the importance of washing one's hands.

Not only can it keep you safe, it can keep everyone around you safe by limiting contamination. Germs can live on your hand for 3 hours and the number of germs on your fingertips doubles as soon as you touch a toilet. Henry the Hand, the friendly mascot of National Handwashing Awareness Week, wants to remind you of the 5 Steps of Handwashing and the Four Principles of Hand Awareness. In order to ensure you are keeping your hands as clean as possible, you should follow these 5 steps:

Wet Your Hands

Wetting your hands can help the soap lather and reach the entire surface of your hands.

Lather

Making sure the soap foams and bubbles ensures that it is properly coating your hands.

Scrub

This doesn't just mean rubbing your hands together... you should be going between your fingers and under your fingernails, and even up to your wrist to make sure you are thoroughly cleaning your hands.

Rinse

Make sure to once again scrub as you rinse off the soap.

Dry

Remember, you can spread 1,000 times more germs with damp hands than dry hands.

Henry also reminds us of the Four Principles of Hand Awareness. These tell us not to cough into our hands, not to sneeze into our hands, to avoid touching our face, and to wash our hands when they are dirty or before eating. While these may seem like obvious suggestions, it is important to be conscious of these principles. Did you know on average people touch their face 16 times an hour? Especially in a global pandemic, this is a big issue. Touching your face- or your mask- in public should be avoided to the best of your ability. Doing so could transfer any germs that your mask is protecting you from onto your hands. If you do accidentally touch your face or your mask, make sure to wash or sanitize your hands before continuing your day. Remember, always wash your hands before putting on or taking off your mask!

While hand sanitizer has really come to the forefront of the hygiene discussion in recent months, it is important to remember that hand washing and hand sanitizer have different roles in keeping us safe. If your hands are visibly soiled, or you have the option of washing your hands, opt for washing your hands. Its gentler on your skin and can clear away any dirt or grime. Hand sanitizer is great as an on-the-go option: after grocery shopping, pumping gas, or before eating if there is no sink available. Remember, just like with washing your hands, it is important to scrub your hands until they are dry for hand sanitizer to be effective.

Remember to visit HenrytheHand.com to learn more about National Handwashing Awareness Week!

*The Henry The Hand image and name are not owned or copyrighted by Your Bliss Magazine.

New Year Starts Now for Taxpayers

By: Faizan Hag, Editor-in-Chief & Publisher, Your Bliss Magazine

Getting closer to the end of the year, days are very precious. Getting ready for holidays, buying gifts for loved ones and making travel plans are just some of the examples of activities that fill our end of the year months and days. Many plan to be away from their businesses and jobs during the holidays. However, in business, the end of the year mounds extra responsibilities. It must plan for end of the year bonuses, incentives, and end-of-the-year gatherings for business employees and stakeholders.

The most important responsibility to remember for a business, no matter what the quality of its relationship, are taxes due to the federal and state governments. You must make sure you have made arrangements to pay your dues to these entities and plan for the entire year. For retirements, 401ks, and other pension plans, there is still some flexibility until April 15th of the next year, however, the planning and budgeting must be done now.

If you plan for this exercise before the end of the year, it will help you to remain financially healthy and embrace the new year with less stress. Many entrepreneurs choose not to take any time off at the end of the year but plan their vacations after the first of the new year. It helps them to focus on planning for the next year and avoiding financial stress before the next taxes are due. Business is a lot like a human body it requires healthy nourishment, exercise, and good stress management. The team that is involved in governing the business must understand that the more undue stresses your organization goes through, the weaker it gets. The financial tensions in a business are due to unwise decision making and erroneous planning. The effect of such ill decisions and bad business habits does not hit you right away. It takes business cycles for them to confront you. One must always prepare for these cyclical ups and downs that one's business must face. The best strategy is to plan ahead of time. Be well informed about the industry of your business and surround yourself with good and experienced advisors. The company matters a lot.



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Points to Consider when Adopting a New Pet By: Katy Defazio

It's the holiday season! Families are expanding, loved ones are caring, and gifts are giving. Are you considering adopting a pet for your family this holiday season? If so, there are a lot of things you should consider before you bring in your new furry (or not so furry) companion.

Pets should be considered more than just a companion; they are beloved family members. Cat and dogs alike take time, patience, love, and most importantly, money. If you feel as if you are not in the best financial situation in your life, it is probably not the best time to adopt a new pet. Secondly, pets take time to properly train for your new home, as well as specific routines for exercise, feeding, and play time. Dedication to setting these routines is important for a happy, healthy pet. Setting specific feeding times and play times with your pet allows them to live happier; you will notice positive reactions from your pet directly. Animals with anxiety need that extra step of security in their lives, and developing routines will help give them some peace of mind. This lowers the risk of boredom for your pet because they won't be hunting for ways to burn off their energy. Overall, cats and dogs function differently than humans do, and require that extra step of attention for a happy life.

Has your family recently lost a pet or furry companion? Another point to consider when adopting a pet this holiday season is that you shouldn't rush to replace

When the timing feels right to bring on another pet, your heart and mind will tell you.

99

that void in your heart. My husband and I lost our cat over the summer, and we told ourselves that we would not rush to get another pet. When the timing feels right to bring on another pet, your heart and mind will tell you. Healing takes time, and filling that void too soon isn't the best solution. Take time to grieve and reflect on the memories with your previous pet. It is acceptable to take trips to local shelters and rescues to play with other animals to help reflect on the good times you had with your pet. Be patient with yourself and your family when picking out your new furry friend. It took two months for my husband and I to pick out our next pet, and we are grateful that we took the time and patience to pick out the right one.

Have you confirmed that you and your family are ready to adopt a pet this holiday season? There are a number of local shelters and rescues in Western New York that you can adopt from! I adopted my most recent cat from the Ten Lives Club at the Eastern Hills Mall. Other good cat rescues and shelters include Kitten Around Cat Rescue, Precious Paws Rescue, and A Furever Chance. If you are specifically seeking a dog, a few good local rescues include Buddy's Second Chance Rescue, Awesome Paws Rescue, and Furever Friends Dog Rescue of WNY. These are all locally owned and operated rescues in the Greater Buffalo area and should definitely be considered this holiday season.



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Competence, Compassion, Collaboration

Media Review: Castlevania: Nocturne (Season 1) By: Alex Tilton

I loved the first Castlevania series. It understood all of the things needed for a successful adaptation. First; Castlevania knew you had to keep true to the spirit of the source material without being shackled to it. The plot of a video game is almost never going to work as the plot of a movie or a show. You have to write your own story. Second; It knew its audience, and it gave them what they wanted...in spades. Well-developed characters you could root for, and oodles of bloody battles with vampires and other monsters. It was great.

And rather than milk it to death, they made the decision to continue the story with a different generation of characters in a new location. This time we follow Richter Belmont as he and his crew battle vampires in revolutionary France.

The decision to portray French nobles who exploited their peasants as literal vampires is a little on the nose, but it works well enough. The story simply leans into it without batting an eye. The new support characters are similar-ish to the last batch, but clearly their own people with their own story.

Nocturne presents a French Catholic Church in league with vampires in an attempt to crush the nascent rebellion in order to preserve what both groups consider to be 'the natural order'. Each faction admitting that they hate the idea of change more than they hate one another.

Opposing this are a group of young, but nevertheless well-seasoned demon killers descended from still more demon killers. Old before their years, the children of a century's long violent struggle; they are resigned to their fate, but unafraid of it. They fight, they joke, they

bleed, they grow, and some of them die. They feel very human and it's easy to root for them. It's well executed from start to finish. As with the last series, the action is taut and tightly directed, the voice acting is excellent, and the music is superbly woven into the story.

I do have one complaint. The main character, naturally, has a personal flaw he must overcome to triumph. And I thought they could have done a better job of weaving it in. It's an on/off switch, rather than a rising and falling threat, and to me it felt clunky. Richter goes from cocky badass to terrified child instantly in response to a particular person. Better storytelling would have been him getting, say, nervous and fighting poorly in this person's presence and having to work at it to improve.

And in general, this kind of thing is what characterizes the very few flaws that Castlevania has. The atmosphere, the voice acting, the plotting, the pacing, the action and the story beats are all superb. But to facilitate the endgame the plot has to take a certain shape. To accomplish this a character will make an unlikely bad choice or have an inexplicably rapid change of heart. This does keep the plot on track, but it's janky and I can't help but notice it every time. It's a speed bump where the road should rise and fall smoothly so you don't notice it. I don't pretend to know how to write a TV series, but I know it can be done better than this, and it should be.

That being said, Castlevania: Nocturne is a worthy successor to an excellent series. Enjoy it at your earliest convenience.

Image Sources: Rotten Tomatoes





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Book Review: The Ocean at the End of the Lane By: Nicholas Switalski

If you are a fan of Neil Gamin you will enjoy The Ocean at the End of the Lane. It was a highly enjoyable modern take on a classic fairy tale story, with everything from immortal cats and transforming magic worms to an unkillable immortal 11-year-old. On top of that all of this is viewed through a little kid's eyes which makes everything a more fantastical and horrifying experience, especially the way he views adults with the utmost reverence.

My favorite part was showing how powerful and scary Ursula Monkton, the primary antagonist is. When she finally stops trying to be friendly around our main character and she really lets her power show, it is truly something special. Even more so with her main goal of giving everyone what they want. That makes her role of a twisted Mary Poppins even more unsettling.

My least favorite part is how little they actually explore the more fantastical parts. As always with a Neil Gaiman book, he always leaves a lot unexplained. Most of the time that is fine because normally his books are a longer length allowing for more depth.

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The Ocean at the End of the Lane only being 178 pages long

has left me with a whole lot of unanswered questions

fantasy elements feel less fantastical and weirder. Like

for some reason the magic cats aren't born, instead

and also a longing for more of the story. Some of the



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they are pulled from the ground and they never really explain it past that. Knowing how Neil Gaiman likes to work in symbolism and myths/legends I am sure that this is either a reference or he is trying to symbolize something. It's not like It was a highly symbolism or using a myth would be enjoyable modern too hard for this book either. After all, the three main helpers seem to be take on a classic based on "The Triple Goddess" (The fairy tale story... Maiden, The Mother, and The Crone). The book also doesn't fully explain why the opal miner's death is causing the

> With the specific issues I pointed out I feel as though it could have easily been fixed with a few changes here and there. But to explore more of the fantastical world, I feel that would require the book to be much longer. Personally, I would give this book an 8/10. It was extremely enjoyable but I wanted more.

events of the book.

<text>

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Position a rack in the upper third of your oven and preheat to broil. Lightly coat a 2-quart, broiler-safe baking dish with spray.
- 2. In a small bowl, stir together the Panko, Parmesan, parsley, and 2 tablespoons olive oil. Set aside.
- 3. Blanch the green beans: Bring a very large pot of water to a boil. Prepare an ice water bath and set out a large, clean kitchen towel. Place the beans in the water and cook just until crisp-tender, about 3 minutes. Plunge into an ice bath to stop the cooking, then drain and transfer to the towel. Lightly pat dry.
- 4. Meanwhile, heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large, wide saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and mushrooms. Cook, stirring frequently, until the onion is soft and golden and the mushrooms brown and have given up their liquid, about 15 minutes. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil. Sprinkle the flour over the top. Cook, stirring, for 1 to 2 minutes more, until all of the flour turns golden and no white bits remain.
- 5. Slowly add the milk a few splashes at a time, stirring between each addition to prevent lumps from forming. Increase the heat to medium high. Stir in the salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Cook and stir, allowing the sauce to bubble, running a wooden spoon or spatula along the bottom of the pan. Continue cooking and stirring until the sauce reduces and thickens to resemble a creamy gravy, about 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the Greek yogurt.
- 6. Transfer half the green beans to the prepared baking dish. Spread half the sauce over the green beans. Add the remaining green beans and top with the remaining sauce. Sprinkle the breadcrumb mixture over the top.
- 7. Broil, watching closely, until the casserole is bubbling and beginning to brown on top, 1 to 3 minutes, depending on your broiler. Let stand for 10 minutes prior to serving. Garnish with additional fresh parsley.

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup - whole wheat panko breadcrumbs
1/4 cup - freshly grated Parmesan cheese
2 tablespoons - chopped fresh parsley
plus additional for garnish
4 tablespoons - extra-virgin olive oil divided
2 1/2 pounds - green beans trimmed
1 medium onion - very thinly sliced

8 ounces - baby bella (cremini) mushrooms sliced **3 tablespoons** - all-purpose flour

- 2 cups 2% milk
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 7 ounces 2% Greek yogurt





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