

Magda Szubanski is Honourary Patron of Giving Week

Ten Ways to Kick the Kringle (and still have fun)

Go for the Warm Inner Glow. Instead of giving out Christmas presents, make a donation on a workmate's behalf. Pick a group from the more than 1000 listed at the Australian Giving Centre at

www.ourcommunity.com.au/donations that you think your colleague would support and give them a card telling them who you have donated to. You can give as little as \$5 or as much as you like via credit card using the Australian Giving Centre - a safe, free service. The benefit will last longer than a pair of socks, a packet of soaps or box of chocolates.

Set the Challenge. At the start of December, set everyone in the workplace a good-natured "extreme challenge" - to grow a handlebar moustache; to jog up to the 20th floor without resting; to have a smoke-free workday; to swap chips for salads every day for a week. A week or so before Christmas bring everyone together to check the results. Everyone has to provide proof of having completed their challenge (take a vote if the proof is ambiguous). Those who have failed pay \$20 to a community group via the Australian Giving Centre; those who have passed only pay \$10. Give a prize for those who have gone further than required, those who have taken the most liberty with the wording of the challenge, etc.

Make or Bake it. Have people make their own gifts – a plate of biscuits; a hand-knitted scarf; a poem; a song. For those without talent at cooking or knitting or poetry or music, crumple up a sheet of A4 and say it's an Origami rock. Charge \$5 for people to lodge and/or receive a gift, and donate the money to a community group chosen by popular vote.

Paint Yourself into a Corner. Get staff members to pair up, give them some paints or crayons and ask them to create a portrait of each other. Hold an auction during your Christmas party and donate the proceeds to a community group of the purchaser's choice. (Drive up the price by promising to display every portrait that goes for less than \$10 on the company noticeboard for the entire month of January.)

Let's Get Physical. Hold an Office Olympics, with points awarded for the winner of each event. Get your most creative people on the job of coming up with the events - the Get the Sack Race, the Revolving Chair Marathon, Pencil Darts, etc. Entry to each event costs a gold coin, with proceeds going to a community group closest to the heart of the person who collects the most points. Give the winner a trophy to be displayed on their desk and handed back at next year's event to create some yearlong buzz.

Give it Away. Set up a Christmas tree at your office (buy it from a community group - see www.ourcommunity.com.au/christmastrees) and ask for nicely wrapped presents. Find an organisation that could benefit and ask them what sort of things would be most useful - an organisation that helps kids may like toys that can be used as Christmas gifts; a pet shelter could probably use some dog food; a community

legal centre might enjoy gifts of office supplies or a supply of biscuits for staff meetings (yep, community groups are really that poor!). If you don't know a group you can help, go to a Kmart store and place your gifts under a Wishing Tree (www.kmart.com.au/community/ wishingtree) for welfare groups to distribute.

Your Presence is your Present. Ask your community group contacts about the sort of skills they could use in the year ahead: it could be accountancy or legal skills, secretarial skills, desktop publishing skills, painting and decorating skills - you never know until you ask the question. Make a list and post it on your noticeboard and ask people to pledge their time by putting their name against a list item. Those who don't fit any of the requirements may like to make a financial donation instead. Have a look through the Community-Business Partnerships Matching Service at **www.ourcommunity.com.au/matching** to get some ideas.

For the True Addicts. If you can't manage to Kick the Kringle this year, ensure that your gift-giving helps the community by stipulating that all presents must be purchased at an op-shop, or that they be Fair Trade certificated, or that they be produced and distributed by a community group.

Give a Virtual Gift. Another option is to exchange presents that go to people that really need them - go online and buy your Kringle a pig or a cow or a sheep or a goat or even a toilet from Oxfam (www.oxfam.org.au/) or Care Australia (/www.careaustralia.org.au/). The person gets a card saying what's been given in their name.

Make a Bid. Pool your Kris Kringle dollars and make a bid on an item listed for the 2007 Giving Auction. There are some terrific items listed for sale - from surfboards to cookbooks to cricket memorabilia to Star Wars figurines - with all items provided by an Australian celebrity and all proceeds to go to a specified community group. Visit www.ourcommunity.com.au/auction to find out what's up for grabs.

NEED MORE HELP?

- Can't think of a group to connect with? There's a list of great community causes you can search by interest area or postcode at www.ourcommunity.com.au/directory
- Don't know how to make a donation? There are more than 1000 community appeals listed at www.ourcommunity.com.au/donations You can give online and commission-free.
- Want other ways to give? You can find out about all the many ways you can make a contribution (by giving time, books, toys, furniture, blood, blankets, computers, phones, clothes, etc.) at www.ourcommunity.com.au/giving