

Carry the Giving Spirit into the New Year

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All the hustle and bustle of the holiday season sometimes leaves us so preoccupied, that we forget to take a moment to see other people's needs around us. As we enter into a new year, let's refocus and resolve to continue the giving spirit of the holiday season throughout the year.

A wonderful idea for a new year's resolution is to work on finding ways to be of service to others and to extend kindness. In taking the time to help others, we ultimately help ourselves, because making other people feel loved and seen, makes us feel good too.

There are limitless ways you can help others beyond the holiday season. Volunteer at a local non-profit organization with a cause that speaks to you. Surprise a stranger by picking up his or her tab at a restaurant or buy a cup of coffee for the person in line behind you. You don't even need to leave your neighborhood in order to give back in a big way.

Here are some other ways you can give back:

Prepare and Deliver a Meal

Spend quality time in your [Mark-Taylor kitchen](#) and pour your heart into a home-cooked meal for someone you know (or don't know all that well). Use your go-to recipe or experiment with a new one. A homemade pasta dish is always a winner. Use your kitchen space to showcase your big, giving heart. Let it shine by preparing food for someone who doesn't expect it, but will truly appreciate the gesture. After you've made the dish, you'll have the joy of delivering it and, best yet...experiencing their reaction. If you can't think of someone to prepare a dish for, contact a nearby senior citizen home and see if they can suggest one of their residents.

Give a Helping Hand

Giving back can start within your own family. And if you don't have family nearby, you can help a friend. Find ways to lend a helping hand, perhaps by offering to assist with odds and ends chores around your relative or friend's [Mark-Taylor luxury apartment](#). Who doesn't want help organizing their closet? A double benefit comes from you offering to bring the unwanted clothes and accessories to a secondhand store. How about helping your loved one with a project they haven't had time to finish or even offer your dining room as place to share a meal together. And preparing the meal in your efficient and exquisite [Mark-Taylor kitchen](#), is almost like therapy for you.

Host a "For a Cause" Cookie Exchange

No one complains when they receive homemade cookies. So continue your holiday baking throughout the New Year and give back to others at the same time by hosting a "for a cause" cookie exchange.

Ask your guests (or [Mark-Taylor neighbors](#)) to bake a dozen cookies for a cause, and a second dozen for exchanging with each other. Invite your guests over for a casual evening in your living room, where you can sample and trade cookies. You could ship the cookies overseas to our servicemen and women or you might decide to deliver the cookies to a children's hospital, soup kitchen, or to someone who you know is going through a hard time. Make (or buy) cards to add to the cookies for a personal touch.

Help the Homeless

Gather with your friends or family members on your patio to enjoy the weather while assembling non-perishable food bags or hygiene kits for distributing to homeless individuals.

Making care bags is an easy and needed way to connect with homeless neighbors. Fill bags with items like bottled water, granola bars, trail mix, and applesauce. You can also assemble hygiene kits containing nail clippers, toothpaste and a toothbrush, and deodorant. Keep the bags in your car and hand them out to homeless individuals as you encounter them.

Give and You Shall Receive

You might be surprised by what or who you attract as you give. In little ways and in big ways, your kindness will be returned to you, and that is a given.