

The Meaning Behind Presents

By Cierra Tomaso

A smell of cookies wafted up into the rafters of 144 Milky Way Drive. A girl sat bent over her sewing, working as hard as she could. She wished the cookies were hers. Soon, a tiny deer emerged from her scissors. She cut it out of a brown fabric, cheap, about ten cents a yard at Fabric Byless. The girl pricked her finger with the needle, and promptly dropped everything.

"Oh crud." She picked it up and went back to work. The gift was for her cousin.

"And it's near Christmas time, best not mess it up now." She stitched a small line around the outline of the deer, leaving a small opening for stuffing. The girl's name was Alice, and she enjoyed sewing normally, but this was in a rush. The cousin was poor, and had about as many toys as a mouse has pet cats.

Alice stuffed the deer with fabric scraps and stitched the space up, then fluffed it up and tied a ribbon around it. It was, really, the best toy a six year old could have in 1810, in England. Well, at least a poor child.

Alice stuck the deer in a pocket in her apron and went off to work at the shoe factory.

Six days later at Christmas Eve, the cousin received the deer with ecstasy.

"Wait, Alice, I'll put Deery down." said

Wendy. Wendy was Alice's cousin. Right now Alice was trying to jerk her into a lively game of London Bridge.

It was then that Growl, Alice's dog, made his entrance.

"GRRROWWL!" the dog grasped the deer firmly in his jaws and shook it crazily.

"NOOO!" cried Wendy, and Wendy rushed to the dog, but the damage was done...

The deer was wrecked.

That night, Wendy slept restlessly. She didn't hear the scuffling and "OOF!" that came down the dusty old chimney. In the morning, Wendy looked at her stocking slowly, half afraid Santa forgot, since she had had a deer.

"Alice!" cried Wendy in hysterics. "LOOK!" She waved a parcel in Alice's face and ripped it open. In it was a tiny deer, almost identical to Deery except it had a tag saying, "Happy Holidays, Sincerely, Santa."

"What are you going to name him?" asked Alice. Wendy looked at her like she was crazy. "OBVIOUSLY, what Christmas is about!"

"What's that?" questioned Alice, wondering if the answer would be 'presents!'

"Joy."

Slate Clinics to Explain Medicare Part D Changes

Many Medicare Prescription Drug (Part D) Plans are making major changes in their benefits starting January 2007. Plans are required to notify customers, in advance, of any changes they are making, but they are allowed to continue to use the current plan names. Even if you are completely satisfied with your current plan, read your monthly statement carefully, particularly the section on "How your plan will work for 2007."

Those who had an enhanced plan in 2006 that covered both generic and brand name drugs after the initial coverage period, also known as "the gap," will be significantly impacted. In 2007, enhanced plans will cover only generics in that region and some individuals may spend up to the catastrophic coverage zone. If this is the case, an enhanced plan may not be the most economical choice for next year. Subscribers may switch to any other Part D plan during the annual enrollment period, November 15 to December 31, 2006. The next opportunity to change will be at the end of 2007.

The Drug Plan Finder is a Medicare computer program that gives access to the premiums, deductibles and the co-payments charged by each plan for specific medications. Using information on the dosage and medication strength

of drugs each individual uses, the Finder calculates the amount the individual will spend each month for every plan. This program is available to the public at www.medicare.gov. For those without internet access or with limited experience, SHIIP (Senior Health Insurance Information Program) will process your information through the Finder and provide details on the three least expensive plans. These results will be mailed to the individual.

To acquaint you with rules of the Medicare Drug Plan and collect the necessary information on your personal medication usage, SHIIP will be hosting multiple free clinics during the annual enrollment period. These clinics last about 90 minutes and are held on the third floor of the CMAST Building on the campus of Carteret Community College in Morehead City. Call the Cooperative Extension office at 222-6359 to sign up for one of the sessions.

SHIIP counselors are local volunteers who provide information on and assistance with health insurance for seniors. They do not recommend or sell specific products or plans.

The sessions are held at 9 a.m. and again at 10:30 a.m. December 5, 7, 13, 14, 20, 21, 27, 28.

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