

For holidays, retailers going green



Entrepreneur Betsy Storm says holidays are for being thoughtful and having the least impact on the environment. She gives used books as gifts. "I look year-round," she says, "to find just the perfect match" for family and friends.

Yet, other revelers want less debt, stuff

By Eileen Alt Powell
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NEW YORK — Many Americans are cutting their spending this holiday season, scaling back plans for Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa, or looking for gifts that don't break their budgets. Some are trying to take on less debt or reduce the materialism that has come to characterize the season.

As far as Betsy Storm is concerned, the holidays are about being thoughtful — and having a minimum impact on the environment.

"Like a lot of people, we're seeing that we really don't want or need more stuff," said Storm, who runs her own public relations consulting firm in Chicago. "We also want to make an effort to do more recycling, refreshing, reusing."

Scaling back can mean used books, eBay gifts, or giving to charity.

And to limit overspending, Storm uses only cash, not credit, on her holiday purchases.

One of her favorite strategies is buying used books from a shop run by a suburban Chicago library, especially art books, cookbooks and music books, she said. "I look year-round to find just the perfect match" for family members and friends, she said.

When her daughter wanted a set of *Sex and the City* DVDs, she found them used on the eBay auction site.

"There's a lot of high-quality, gently used merchandise around," Storm said. "But you have to be selective. I wouldn't want my family to think I wasn't being thoughtful or selective about their gifts."

Storm also believes in charitable gifts and this year is giving various animals through Heifer International, a nonprofit that provides income-producing livestock to needy families.

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