



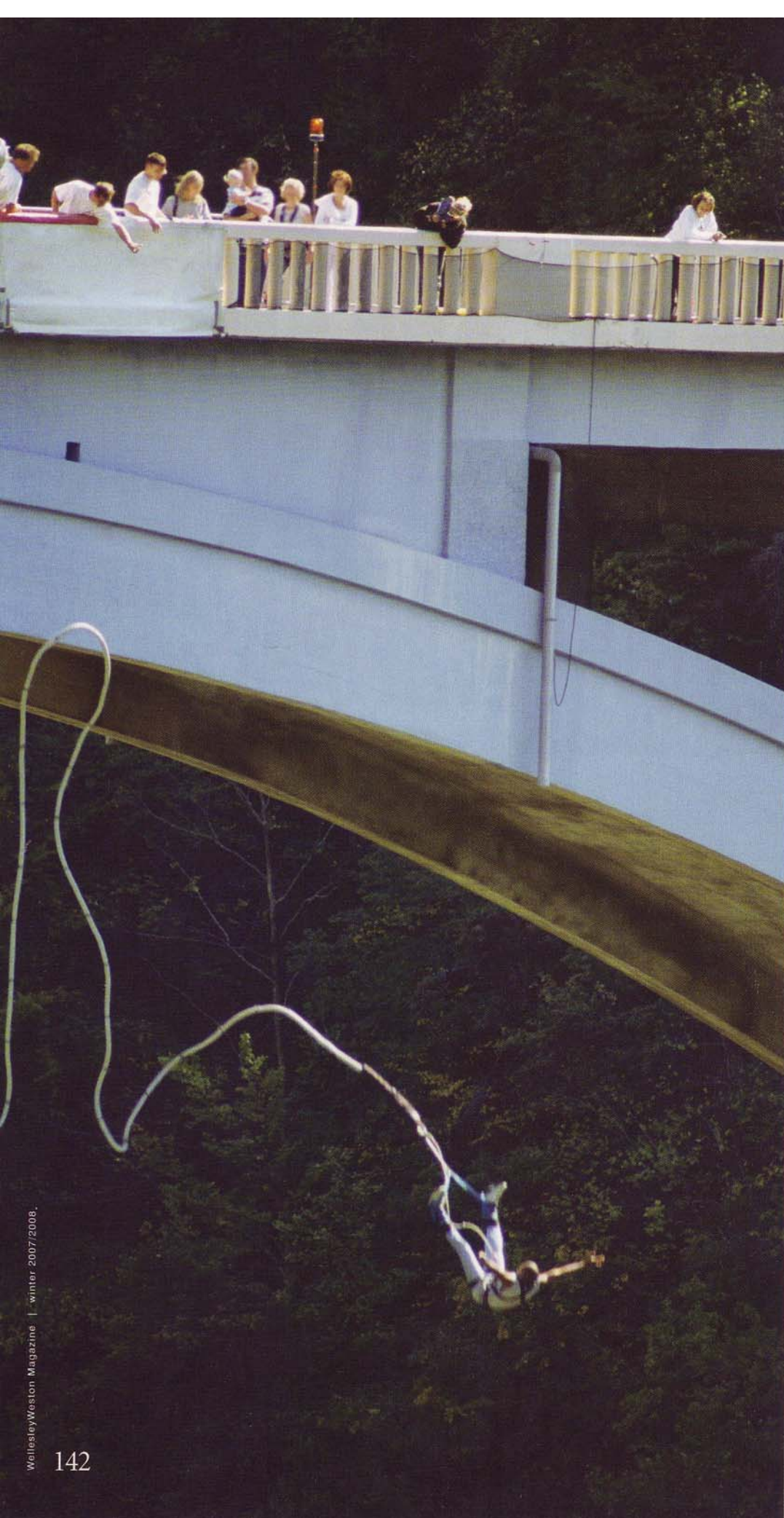


Outside the Box

UNIQUE HOLIDAY GIFTS THAT
GO ABOVE AND BEYOND
AND MAYBE EVEN 0-60 MPH
IN SECONDS.

JENNIFER S. BUCKLEY **writer**

gift giving is a daunting task for many of us. Not only is finding just the right thing a challenge, but combine that with the hectic holiday season and an endless list of gifts to buy, and any holiday spirit you have can melt faster than a marshmallow over a yule log.



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“WE’RE NOT ABOUT STUFF, WE’RE ABOUT EXPERIENCES.”

—Incredible Days co-owner David Soffer

But there's hope this season. Wellesley and Weston are brimming with wonderful stores that make the holiday shopping experience pleasurable and convenient. From Weston Center to Wellesley Square, Church Square to Linden Square, and down the road to Wellesley Hills, you don't need to travel far to steal the show with some wow 'em-quick-grab-the-video-camera-to-capture-their-reaction gifts. What's more, some local companies are making it their business to provide one-of-a-kind "experiences" for the special people in your life who really do have everything. Read on and discover some new ideas from big budget to small that can cover the entire gift-giving list, from family to teachers to business associates.

THE ADRENALINE EXPERIENCE

For one local company, providing unforgettable gifts is not only their business, it's their passion. Incredible Days is a business started by two Babson College graduates that spe-

“...THEY (GOODDEEDS LLC) SEARCH HIGH AND LOW FOR THE HOTTEST, THE BEST, AND THE MOST APPROPRIATE GIFT IDEAS.”

cializes in the “extraordinary.” “We’re not about stuff, we’re about experiences,” says co-owner David Soffer. And boy do they have those. They offer a list of adventures ranging from being a fighter pilot for a day to driving in a NASCAR-style race for another; or if these won’t get the heart pumping, try les-

sons in learning to fly a helicopter. And for those who prefer to stay firmly planted on the ground, Incredible Days offers the calm of soothing spas, the thrill of gourmet cooking schools, or the chance to exercise analytical skills as a guest at a murder-mystery dinner party.

Incredible Days also makes it really simple by allowing you to order gifts online. They will then send a gift package or an e-mail with instructions on how to redeem the gift. Soffer points out that they are open to ideas, and will be happy to work with a client to put something “extraordinary” together. So if you have a loved one who has a hankering to have Elton John sing in their backyard, by golly, these guys just might be able to make it happen.

THE VIP TREATMENT

Another local company in the business of fantastic gift giving is GoodDeeds LLC, a Wellesley-based life management services company that specializes in just about anything that makes your life less crazy. The company provides gift “research,” which means they search high and low for the hottest, the best, and the most appropriate gift ideas. President Beth Miller shares a client success story where a local woman hired GoodDeeds to research and stock a new wine cellar in their house for her husband. Needless to say, he was thrilled. That’s a gift you just can’t buy in a department store.

GoodDeeds can also ease the pressure of gift-giving by helping their clients brainstorm. For another client, they came up with an outdoorsman’s weekend getaway that was a huge hit. It included off-road

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are gone, the gift of music remains.*



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driving school, fly fishing, and a brand new pair of waders and a fleece jacket. For the more fashion-conscious types on the holiday list, they can even arrange for a whole wardrobe and beauty makeover, just like the ones on television.

For those who love technological gadgets and gizmos, the staff at GoodDeeds will help select items like iPods and digital cameras with whatever bells and whistles are required. Then they take it one step further by making sure everything is set up and ready to go, with a full tutorial on how to use the gizmo should it be necessary. Now that's one-stop shopping.

GETTING PERSONAL

The tried-and-true gift certificate is a staple of giving, but sometimes it can appear to be thoughtless and impersonal. One sure way to eliminate this reaction is to get a list of stores where the shopper likes to shop, and then bundle several certificates together in a fun "container" like a new handbag, or inside a baseball cap. Keep in mind that many certificates can be purchased online, so certificates are merely a click away.

Not feeling creative? Wellesley resident Gail Smith, owner of Creative Touch Presence, can come to the rescue. Smith launched her business with the goal to "make people smile," and believes that the more creative

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Outside The Box

and embellished the gift, the more it tells the recipient that extra time and thought went into its selection. Customers can choose from an array of creative corporate or personal gifts from a number of categories on her website. She offers a dazzling collection of unique containers that keep on giving after what's inside has been consumed, and beautiful gift wrapping and ribbons to adorn any size package. She'll even wrap the gifts that you have purchased yourself. All told, Smith believes that the "presentation is everything" and will do the complete service, from recommending a particular gift or gift collection, to actually wrapping and shipping it direct to its final recipient.

CULTURE CLUB

Museum lovers on your holiday list will love an up-close look at some of Boston's great cultural institutions. From stargazing to priceless art, you can purchase annual gift memberships around town. The Museum of Fine Arts and the Museum of Science for instance, have memberships that include additional discounts, classes, member perks and newsletters with event and exhibit updates. A Museum of Science membership also includes free admission to more than 260 participating science centers and museums worldwide. Memberships make a great gift for families or individuals.

SOURCES:

INCREDIBLE DAYS

David Soffer, Co-Owner
www.incredibledays.com
617.861.4084

GOODDEEDS LLC

Beth Miller, Founder and President
www.gooddeedsllc.com
781.235.0008

MUSEUM OF SCIENCE

Science Park, Boston
www.mos.org
Main number: 617.723.2500
Membership direct line: 617.589.0180

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Avenue of the Arts
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781.259.2200

CREATIVE TOUCH PRESENCE

Gail Smith, owner
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Red Apple Program
www.wellesleyeducationfoundation.org

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For a broader range of charities from which to choose try www.JustGive.org, where donations in the form of gift certificates of any amount can be purchased online for a fee of \$5.00. The recipient of the certificate can then browse through a list of over *one million* local and national nonprofit organizations and hand pick which one will receive the donation.

THE YOUNG AT HEART

For a younger crowd, nothing is more classic than books. The National Education Association's (NEA) list of "Educators' Top 100 Children's Books" is a great resource. Buy a few off the list, or buy the whole list, and when packaged in a great toy box, backpack or bookcase, you've got a reader for life. The sales professionals at Wellesley Booksmith and Dragon Books in Weston are bound to have wonderful ideas for children and the young at heart as well.

For another kid favorite, you can offer a chance to get up close and personal with animals. Consider a behind-the-scenes tour at the New England Aquarium (this is also a package offered by Incredible Days) or a membership to the Massachusetts Audubon Society's Drumlin Farm in Lincoln.

As they say, it's always better to give than to receive. And this year, giving "outside the box" has never been so much fun! **WW**

THE GIFT OF GIVING

In the true spirit of the season, there's also the opportunity to give to non-profit organizations. Instead of the obligatory coffee mug or candy dish, a great way to honor your child's teacher, coach, or other important adult, is through the Wellesley Education Foundation's (WEF) Red Apple program. Simply go to the Wellesley Education Foundation website, click on Red Apple, and make a donation in the person's name you wish to honor. The recipient will receive a Red Apple thank-you card indicating that a donation was made in his or her honor and by whom.

All proceeds go toward supporting the foundation's mission to "offer programs that enhance, enrich, and maintain excellence in the Wellesley Public Schools."

Another way to support a worthwhile cause is a donation to Heifer International, whose mission is to "to work with communities to end hunger and poverty and to care for the earth." This is a fun gift-giving opportunity for the entire family, because you can actually purchase animals for the project. Their website lists a catalog where everything from a flock of chicks, to water buffaloes, to trees can be purchased as gifts. A selection of printable gift card inserts or e-cards are available there as well.