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## Down to Earth: Alternative Holiday Market

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If you're looking for a unique gift this holiday season, an area group is hoping to help while making a difference by shopping locally and keeping the environment in mind.



It's not the mad rush of people found in traditional Black Friday shopping places.

Instead, it's a group of people offering alternatives to traditional holiday gift-giving.

"People can come and buy gifts that are local, sustainable and socially conscious.... and just put a little more meaning in the gifts they are giving this year," says organizer Sarah Thurs.

It's the first ever Alternative Holiday Market put on by the Simple and Sustainable Living Network in Wausau.

Shoppers can purchase locally produced items like organic body products and homemade soap... even soy candles and pottery.

"You are supporting your local community which is also important," says Marguerite Ramlow, owner of the Artha Sustainable Living Center in Amherst.

There are also gift-giving ideas that will make a difference in the lives of others... whether it's a monetary donation to a local food pantry, giving to the Smile Train Organization or purchasing animals for those in third-world countries through Heifer International.

"You can give a gift of honey bees... a hive of bees for \$30. It goes up to water buffalo for \$250... you can also give things like an ark... that has a lot of different animals," says Volunteer Mary Beth Maas.

The Simple and Sustainable Living Network says their goal is to provide a source of gift ideas that have meaning and that can help others in the process.

"The bigger idea of this is to put people above stuff," says Thurs.

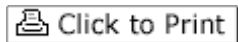
The Alternative Holiday Market will be open again on Sunday at the First Universalist Unitarian Church on Grant Street in Wausau.

The event is free and will run on Sunday from 10:00 am – 1:00 pm.

For a list of organizations you can donate to in honor of someone... click on the links below.

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