

BurrellesLuce Express

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HEADLINE: Buy a gift, help a charity with Biddingforgood

Source Website

Buy a gift, help a charity with ***Biddingforgood***

HELLO, SURVIVORS.

If you're reading these words, it means you've lived through Black Friday.

Contenders, you've shopped till you dropped and may still be sleeping off the effects of your ordeal. Browsers and casual shoppers, you've picked up an item here and an item there, clogging the aisles and slowing the progress of the more serious buyers. Spectators and scaredy cats, once again you've kept far from the madding crowd, preferring to watch the chaos on the evening news.

But no matter the shopper's category, one thing is certain: The season for holiday gift buying is officially under way.

So where, oh where, to buy what for whom?

Because the words you're reading now were written nine days ago, I'm actually predicting the future here. But I can say with a fair amount of certainty that my friend Sue and I ventured out before dawn the day before yesterday to several department store chains and I bought certain family members some pajamas, some socks and a few DVDs.

I'm not organized though, so I'm not done. I'll still have to hit the mall, I'm sure. The big department stores. The bookshops. I'll browse the specialty boutiques for kitchen items and candy. And on Christmas Eve, when I finally figure out who I've forgotten, I'll remember that Sue says you can find something for nearly everyone at the neighborhood supermarket. (Poor Uncle Ed.)

Of course, if I were feeling more inventive this season, I'd toss predictability aside and go with something a little different.

I found an online shopping site a few weeks ago called ***biddingforgood***.com. It's part of ***cMarket***, a Cambridge, Mass., company that puts together online auctions for nonprofits, charities and educational organizations.

The site lists the items to be auctioned, information about the organization the sale would benefit, the opening bid, the history of the bidding so far, and the date and time the bidding will end.

Biddingforgood items can be quirky and unpredictable. What caught my eye when I first logged on was a trip for two to Beijing, China, for Opening Ceremonies at the 2008 Olympics. I can't remember the particulars and it was gone by the time I browsed again this morning.

But first on the featured items list this week: A custom air-brushed guitar painted with the stars and stripes and autographed by the group America. Its estimated value is \$2,500 and the starting bid is \$783. The autographs are certified and the guitar comes with photographs of the musicians signing it. Proceeds from the

purchase go to a counseling group for war veterans called Back from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Also for sale today: tickets for two to Bravo's "Inside the Actor's Studio," estimated value \$100, leading bid \$38 with 16 days to go. The sale will benefit the National Council of Jewish Women.

There's a vacation to Bali or an opportunity to name a new African penguin chick at the New England Aquarium. There's a homemade lap quilt or a weeklong cruise. Jewelry, adventures, dining certificates and sporting events. Items from \$15 to things labeled priceless.

cMarket says part of its mission is to match up like-minded donors, buyers and nonprofit groups to achieve "the act of giving in a new, fun and entertaining way."

And I'm sure somewhere on *biddingforgood*, there's something new, fun and entertaining for Uncle Ed.

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Highlights: Biddingforgood, biddingforgood, cMarket