

Great ideas for holiday giving

I have my Christmas wish list ready early, and I thought I would share it with you. This one might not be like the other lists you see this time of year. Mine might be a tad bit more expensive. I'm not talking about gifts at the level of those in the *Robb Report*, but close.

This wish list isn't for me though, but if you insist, I could use a new set of golf clubs. Actually, this list is for you, to give you some ideas on how to spread out your giving this time of year.

This is a list you can share with your family, friends and co-workers. Maybe they'll join you and together you could create your own "holiday giving circle" like the Women's Initiative of the Community Foundation does.

These are in no particular order of priority or cost, but are instead community needs in the sequence in which I've thought of them during the past few weeks.

Let me start, though, with what may be the coolest gift — we need more than one of them: It's the X4 Extreme Power Wheelchair available at mobility-usa.com. It has a starting price of about \$15,000.

This isn't your father's wheelchair, either (sorry Oldsmobile). It's a four-wheel-drive wheelchair that will go through sand, mud, snow and just



Randy
Maiers
Columnist

about any surface its owner may face. How about one each for every public park and beach in the county?

Gigi Mericka and the Access to Recreation team are working on this one, but they could use some help.

Speaking of the Access to Recreation program, Cindy Babisz is one of the people leading the effort in the Algonac area for the "Extreme Pool Makeover" of the public pool at Lions Field.

They need to raise \$25,000 to secure a matching \$25,000 from the Kellogg Foundation, which will allow them to renovate and upgrade the pool house and pool. You're on my wish list, Cindy.

For Rick Garcia, the new executive director of the United Way of St. Clair County, I wish him a successful first campaign and a long and productive tenure in our community.

For Tyrone Burrell, executive director of Save Our Neighborhoods and Streets, I wish him a surplus budget every year, forever, so the SONS organization can someday have a permanent

home large enough for all of the great programs and projects they offer to young people. A large but modest building, Tyrone.

For our soup kitchens and food pantries, I wish them shelves that are constantly restocked with boxed and canned goods, cereals, baby foods, diapers, toiletries and all of the basic necessities many of us take for granted.

If you want to see how far you can stretch \$100, give it to Alice Rieves at Mid City Nutrition, the Salvation Army on Court Street, or through Trinity United Methodist Church in Algonac.

For Jenny Schultz at Safe Horizons, I wish that all of the women and children in your shelters have their own wish lists fulfilled and that your organization secures another \$25,000 or so in gifts to be matched by the Citizens First Foundation. That would give Safe Horizons a \$200,000 endowment fund (a good start) to help protect its future.

This may seem like an odd time to wish for air conditioning, but every September, and again every June, I wish our schools had air conditioning. I'm not sure how the teachers, staff and kids can concentrate on their work when it's 80-plus degrees outside and hotter inside. I can't give you a cost on this

wish though, let's just say it's a lot. The next time a new school is built, let's give them air.

For our friends in Marine City, I wish them a marketing, advertising and publicity campaign that makes more people aware of what a great little waterfront community they have. It's one of my favorites. A few million bucks for their old city hall wouldn't hurt either, but even the readers of the *Robb Report* might have trouble with that one.

For the city of St. Clair? Well, it's doing pretty well. I wish it continued success as the city transitions from visions to reality.

I don't live in St. Clair, but if I had a vote, I would support the plans of its Downtown Development Authority to open up and renovate the mall area. The plans and ideas so far look wonderful. I would wish for a few more people named Moore or Lockwood, but that gets into human cloning and all kinds of ethical dilemmas.

For the kids at Cleveland, Algonac and Woodrow Wilson elementary schools, how about a rotating set of 25 season tickets to the Ice Hawks hockey games, plus coupons for free hot dogs and drinks for every kid? Round trip bus transportation would be helpful, too.

That's my list. Happy Holidays!