



PRACTICAL WAYS TO CREATE MEANING

Engaging RYH Audiences & Changing Behaviors

Looking for new audiences for your Reclaim Your Holidays efforts? To help you, we did a pilot project and surveyed possible audiences to get their feedback. We found that library story hours, holiday community concerts, wellness fairs and college classes attract audiences interested in RYH. This resource gives you concrete suggestions to engage these audiences and help them change their behaviors.

Locations and Learnings:

Public Library Children's Story Hours

We asked youth librarians in a few Iowa communities if they would read [*The Gift of Nothing*](#) book to children during the Story Hour. These library events usually target pre-K or early elementary-aged children. Sometimes the RYH trainer read the book to the children.

- A display table featured the RYH poster and some handout samples from the RYH resources. They included: "[Top 10 Things Kids Really Want Their Parents to Do with Them](#)," "[Gifts of Experience](#)," "[Spoiling Grandkids - A Guide for Parents](#)," and "[Spoiling Grandkids - A Guide for Grandparents, Aunts and Uncles](#)."
- We gave away *The Gift of Nothing* book if people said they would read it to their families and/or friends.
- Afterward, we asked parents or children how they liked the story and who they read to.

What We Learned:

- Librarians were easy to work with and glad to discuss the topic of more meaningful holidays.
- 68% of participants said they read the book to children who were 18-months to 12 years old. 40% also read it to family members 17 years or older. Some children also read the story to grandparents. Of those that took a copy of *The Gift of Nothing*, 50% indicated they gave fewer material gifts. Another 66% changed one or more things in their holiday celebrations to include more meaning and use fewer natural resources. Though we thought these results were phenomenal, we recommend giving a few copies of the book to the local library, rather than giving everyone free copies of the book. Then, have copies at the story hour table and encourage parents to check it out. It's more affordable *and* more environmentally friendly!
- Our survey responses showed that this audience is a new, interested group for RYH trainers to engage. Story hours target parents of young children who can set the tone of holiday and environmental learning for years to come.

Free Community Holiday Concert

Before a holiday performance, a RYH trainer hosted a display in the theater lobby. Concert goers could receive *The Gift of Nothing* book if they promised to read the book to family/friends before the holidays. We offered bookmarks with ideas for de-stressing during the holidays and reducing the environmental impact of holidays.

What We Learned:

- RYH staff talked to lots of people at this lobby event before and during the performance (when parents needed to take babies out into the lobby). Many were parents or grandparents who can both be good messengers for RYH's concepts. Several commented they read the book to grandchildren who visited over the holidays. 68% of participants said they talked with others about the book's message.
- Instead of giving away books, people could sign-up to put their name in a drawing for five books (more or less, depending on your budget). This action is an effective tool to engage your audience.

Wellness Fair – This event for business professionals attracted hundreds of community members.

- At the RYH display table, we invited participants to write on a sticky note “what do you want to do **more** of during the holidays?” or “what do you want to do **less** of during the holidays?”
- Participants received a copy of the RYH [5-Minute Assessment](#) and signed up to put their name in a drawing for a copy of *The Gift of Nothing* book. (We gave away 5).

What We Learned – Wellness Fairs are good venues for Reclaim Your Holidays. At the one RYH attended, hundreds of community members participated.

- At least 30 people wrote on a sticky note “what they loved about the holidays” and read what others had written. It was an effective way to engage this audience.
- 40 people provided their email contact information for a book drawing and also signed up for the RYH e-newsletter.

College/University

This is a reliable, self-contained audience of students, faculty and staff. A RYH trainer at an Iowa private college offered a Make-a-Mix activity for students and staff. Participants paid \$10 to make three different mixes –soup, cookies, and a peppermint cache. About 40 people attended.

- RYH trainer hosted a table displaying one panel of the RYH poster, *The Gift of Nothing* book, bookmarks, [5-Minute Assessments](#), and a Make a Plan handout to increase meaning during the holidays.

- Participants could peruse handouts including – [Gifts of Experience](#), [Second Hand Gifts](#), [Farmers' Market Gifts](#) (or print a few copies to give away.)

Student-led Make-a-Mix Activity: Students in a university class chose Reclaim Your Holidays for a community project. They organized a free make-a-mix cookie event. About 40 college students and/or campus families attended.

What We Learned: It takes some organizing to hold a make-a-mix event. Participants in both settings said they wanted to make more of these gifts for the holidays.

- Several web sites have make-a-mix recipes. [Budget 101](#) for example. This information was on the recipe attached to the mix.
- This is an interactive way to engage a wide variety of audiences – family groups, teenagers, university students, and more.

