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HOLIDAY CHEER FILLS LOWER MANHATTAN

WHAT'S UP DOWNTOWN

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Warming Up Downtown

Did You Know

LowerManhattan.info provides news and information about Lower Manhattan through a free newsletter and website. It is led by the City of New York in partnership with the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, New York State and the federal government.

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FROM SINGING TREES to twinkling plum blossoms, holiday cheer will be easy to spot this winter on the streets of Lower Manhattan. Several downtown neighborhoods have plans to commemorate holiday traditions and celebrations with beautiful decorations and festive events for all to enjoy.

In Little Italy, neighborhood business owners are setting their sights high as they sponsor the second annual Christmas in Little Italy Celebration. "We want to make this a destination spot in New York City for the holidays," said Robert Ianniello, Jr., president of the Little Italy Merchant's Association. People can still think of midtown when they think of Christmas in Manhattan, he said, as long as they think of Mulberry Street, too.

To that end, during each weekend in December, Little Italy's three-block stretch of restaurants and cafes, on Mulberry Street from Canal to Broome, will be transformed into a winter wonderland, with overhead holiday lighting and beautiful ornament-laden trees on every corner. Each Saturday will feature a parade of floats through the streets, while a priest-led religious procession will follow Mass every Sunday. The area's many restaurants also will play their part, serving holiday meals and sweets while competing to take the prize for most beautifully decorated storefront. "What we have planned reminds me of a Naples of the past," said Ianniello.

Holiday cheer also can be found in neighboring Chinatown. Although Lunar New Year, the highlight of the Chinese winter calendar, doesn't arrive until the end of January, festive lighting will line the streets well before that. During the winter months, twinkling lights shaped like Chinese plum blossoms will hang overhead. Often

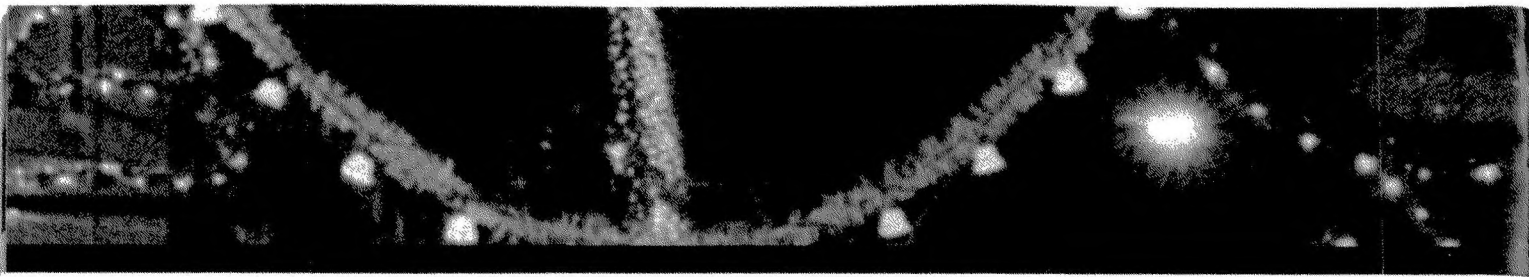
present in Chinese paintings, the plum blossom shows vitality by blooming in the cold of winter, explained Don Lee, executive director of the Chinatown Community Economic Development Project, which is organizing the decorations. "It is symbolic of Chinese-Americans and of Chinatown—that we will continue to grow even through adverse conditions," he said.

Not to be outdone, the South Street Seaport will have at its center a 50-foot Chorus Tree. This tree-shaped stage, decorated with thousands of tiny, twinkling, white lights, will be filled by members of the Big Apple Chorus, a premier a cappella singing group. The chorus will give six performances each weekend in December, as well as special performances on Christmas Eve and New Year's Day. Santa will stroll along the seaport's cobbled streets seven days a week through December 24, giving children ample opportunity to hand-deliver their wish lists and pose for complimentary photos atop his lap.

As Christmas ends, Kwanzaa begins. Lower Manhattan's observance will include an afternoon of events honoring this weeklong African celebration of family, community and culture, sponsored by the African Burial Ground Project. The event will take place on December 28 between noon and 4 p.m. at 290 Broadway and is open to the public. Call (212) 337-2001 for reservations.

In keeping with the richness and diversity of its history and neighborhoods, Lower Manhattan provides many ways to celebrate the special traditions that grace this time of the year. Happy holidays. 





DOWNTOWN HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

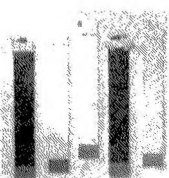
The holiday season signals a convivial time – whether intimate catch-up dinners with out-of-town friends visiting the Big Apple or festive office celebrations for co-workers to socialize and share holiday cheer. And, gift giving is a hallmark of the season. Our spies have pulled together a downtown gift guide with a little something for everyone. For even more ideas, visit our website at www.lowermanhattan.info.

FOR KIDS



Teddy bear with sailor suit

For a Beary Merry Christmas...this little fella' (about 12" tall) is guaranteed to bring cheer to any tot. Teddy's decked out in his Navy sailor suit because he's from the South Street Seaport gift shop. For the grown-up sailor, the shop has a diverse selection of books, from the history of the area to picture books of ships. Of particular interest to any NYC history buff are charming, nostalgic black-and-white photos of old New York, taken in the early part of the century around the seaport area. South Street Seaport Gift Shop, 14 Fulton Street (near South Street). (212) 748-8663; Teddy bear, \$12; city prints, \$6.25

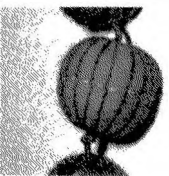


Child's growth chart

Little Folk Art carries an exclusive line of enchanting children's furnishings and toys. This whimsical growth chart is but one item in the line of hand-painted, one-of-a-kind accessories. Each is slightly different, but all feature a decorative motif—a rabbit, train or truck, for example—in a variety of colors.

Little Folk Art, 159 Duane Street, (212) 267-1500; growth chart, \$128

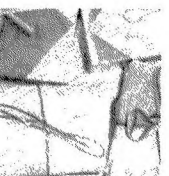
FOR HER



Moroccan wool necklace

Italian designer Luisa Cevese throws no scrap of fabric away. Instead, she recycles them for the manufacture of her exotic, elegant and sturdy handbags, briefcases and totes. Pastec carries an entire wall's worth of these designs, in countless fabrics, colors and shapes. Also among the eclectic mix of unusual clothing and accessories that owner Sara Spinelli carries are extraordinary necklaces from Morocco. They are constructed from individual, hand-made, felted-wool balls, embellished with embroidery.

Pastec, 459 Broome Street (near Mercer Street), (212) 219-3922; Moroccan wool necklaces, from \$150 to \$250



Fragrant soaps

Count on Chinatown's Pearl River trading mart to have enticing gift possibilities among the lively merchandise mix. Dozens of aromatic and beautifully wrapped soaps are available for as little as \$1.25. Prowl the store's three floors to unearth other novelties with reasonable price tags, from herbal bath powders to horn hair combs. Pearl River, 277 Canal Street (at Broadway), (212) 431-4770; wrapped soaps, from \$1.25

FOR HIM



Sterling silver razor

Yes, of course he can use a disposable razor, but what guy wouldn't prefer the pampering touch and utter luxury of a sterling silver shave? The Art of Shaving is dedicated to all things related to shaving. If the pricey sterling razor is out of the question, there are literally dozens of lathers and balms, oils and creams and bracers and brushes.

The Art of Shaving, 67 Wall Street near Pearl Street, (212) 344-2900; sterling silver razor, \$650

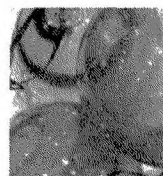


Reproduction of a balance toy

Popular in the late nineteenth century, balance toys were a favorite of children and adults. Whether resting (truly balancing on a point) or swinging pendulum-like on their stands, they're captivating to view. New York Nautical, in addition to carrying everything and anything maritime and nautical, at Christmastime adds to its merchandise mix with handsomely crafted, holiday-themed balance toys.

New York Nautical, 140 West Broadway (near Thomas Street), (212) 962-4522; balance toys, \$65 to \$95

FOR HOME



Hand-blown glass ornaments

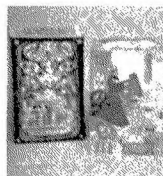
Talk about blowing bubbles...Brooklyn glass artist Michiko Sakano has created one-of-a-kind globes, transparent with ethereal swirls of lavender, citrine and sky-blue. Imagine an entire tree with twinkling white lights. Leave the fruit cake at home and bring an ornament as a very special house gift this year. Clie, 92 Thompson Street (near Spring Street), (212) 966-8991; hand-blown Christmas ornaments, \$50



Table linens

The Craft Caravan shop has been in SoHo for thirty-five years, a pioneer in the district. The gallery-like shop is filled with traditional handicrafts from Africa, India and Central Asia. For gracing a Kwanzaa table, pick up a set of the all-cotton, screen-printed napkins and coordinated tablecloths in bright colors.

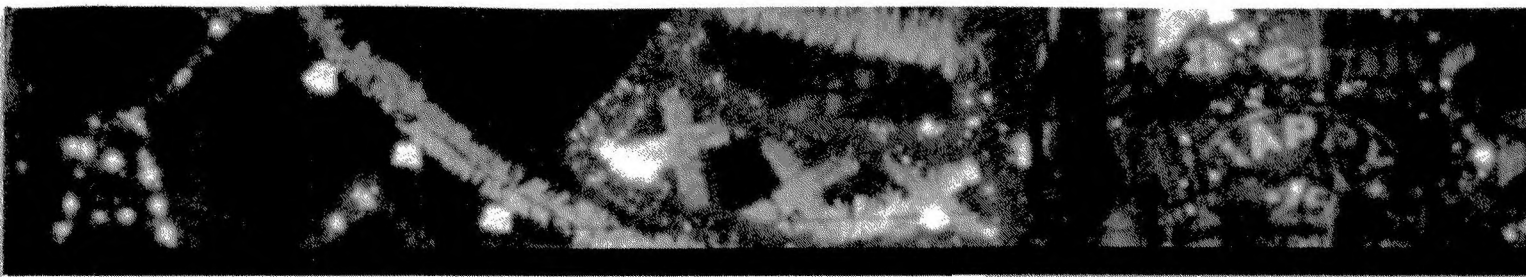
Craft Caravan, 63 Greene Street (near Broome Street), (212) 431-6669; napkins, \$32 (set of four); tablecloths (45" x 62"), \$35



Tzedakah box

The Museum of Jewish Heritage's exquisite tzedakah (charity) boxes will provide colorful counterpoint to a room wherever they are placed. Made in Israel, they depict Jerusalem street scenes.

The Museum of Jewish Heritage, 18 First Place (Battery Park City), (212) 766-0820 x102; tzedakah box, \$45



LENDING A HELPING HAND



FOUR YEARS AGO, when chef Henry Meer opened City Hall on Duane Street, his second downtown restaurant, he was determined to find a way to give back to the city that he is so passionate about.

With Christmas coming, he discovered the perfect opportunity and teamed up with the City's Department of Homeless Services to establish a tradition for a festive Christmas Eve supper. Through the Department's Office of Special Services, arrangements were made for over three hundred people to attend, two hundred of them children. Coming from nearly a dozen homeless shelters throughout the City, the attendees enjoy a classic, three-course Christmas dinner, from luscious butternut squash soup to melt-in-your-mouth apple cobbler.

Meer didn't have to look far for other volunteers to join the effort. His kitchen staff, waiters and waitresses don their toques and aprons, *sans* paychecks, to work that day, as do many of Meer's regular customers, including City Hall politicians, judges, lawyers and Wall Street CEOs. Volunteers bus tables, fill water glasses or lend a hand to small children to unwrap gifts.

Indeed, gifts inadvertently became a part of the tradition, too, although they weren't in the original blueprint. "I don't know how it happened," muses Meer, "but the first year a group of the Brooklyn Hogs [a motorcycle club] pulled up front, literally bearing gifts for the kids." The bikers distributed presents, and now, they also have become regular volunteers, conducting a toy drive and bringing gifts for everyone.

The goodies are distributed by the event's Santa, Bob Harris, who is no stranger to volunteerism. When Harris retired from the Transit Police, he traded in his shield for a guidebook. He volunteered at Big Apple Greeters,

a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to match City visitors with knowledgeable, enthusiastic New Yorkers.

Since the attack on the World Trade Center, volunteering has taken on new significance for people and has attracted many fresh faces. "After 9/11, we had a huge increase in volunteerism," comments Jessica Tynan, the Volunteer Coordinator of the Hamilton-Madison House, a social services agency and settlement house with seventeen sites in Lower Manhattan. "Fortunately, that number of volunteers has remained high."

Most people feel the urge to volunteer more strongly at holiday time, but the need exists year round. Meg McConnell, an economist with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and a longtime downtown volunteer with the Coalition for the Homeless, says, "There aren't more people in need at holiday time, we're just more aware of the need. We are more motivated to do something, perhaps because we look inward more."

Many facilities rely heavily on volunteers during the holiday season when extra activities drain manpower. A few of the organizations that will need a helping hand in Lower Manhattan are listed at right. Of course, other volunteer opportunities abound, and anyone wanting to help out should call local branches of charities, churches, synagogues, homeless shelters and soup kitchens to find out what their specific needs are during the holidays. For general volunteer opportunities, www.volunteermatch.org is also a source.

As for City Hall's Christmas Eve feast, Meer invites anyone who wants to be involved in the event to call (212) 227-7777. 

WHERE TO VOLUNTEER

THE LOWER EAST SIDE GIRLS CLUB

The Lower East Side Girls Club needs volunteers for its December 14 holiday crafts fair, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Call (212) 982-1633.

THE ALFRED E. SMITH RECREATION CENTER

The Alfred E. Smith Recreation Center can use help December 11, from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., to wrap gifts; December 12, from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., to distribute gifts; December 23, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., to assist with set up, monitoring and scorekeeping for the center's chess tournament. Call (212) 285-0300.

MARINERS' TEMPLE BAPTIST CHURCH

Volunteers are needed at the Mariners' Temple Baptist Church from December 19-23 to wrap presents, prepare decorations and package food. Call (212) 233-0423.

THE FEDERATION OF PROTESTANT WELFARE AGENCIES

The Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies has fifty-four member sites in Lower Manhattan, including day care facilities, senior centers and shelters. Volunteers are needed to deliver and/or serve meals at a variety of sites. Additionally, hands are needed December 19, 20 and 23 to sort and bag toys. Call (212) 777-4800 x332.

NEW YORK CARES

New York Cares provides three links on its website to volunteer opportunities during the holidays. Go to www.nycares.org and look for the links on the right-hand side, which are marked: "Help with the Recovery Effort," "Secret Santa" and "Help During the Holidays." City Harvest has countless opportunities for volunteers during what it calls its "harvest season," including helping with food drives and joining its "street fleet." Call (917) 351-8700 or (212) 228-5000.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF BROOKLYN AND QUEENS

Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens also conducts a major toy drive for the holidays and distributes toys from four centers. The Brooklyn West Family Center is one train stop from the WTC site and is home to many families affected by the tragedy. They are in need of volunteers during the week of December 16, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., to sort, wrap and distribute gifts. Call (718) 722-6008.

KIDS FOR COMMUNITY

Countless volunteer opportunities are available for children at Kids for Community. Check out their website at www.kidsforcommunity.org. On the neighborhood drop-down menu, plug in SoHo/TriBeCa to see pages of results for one-time volunteer jobs or on-going volunteer opportunities, all geared especially for children.

For more volunteer opportunities in Lower Manhattan, please visit our website at www.lowermanhattan.info.

VISIT US AT WWW.LOWERMANHATTAN.INFO FOR NEWS UPDATED DAILY



WHERE TO GO TO WARM UP DOWNTOWN



'TIS THE SEASON for keeping warm. And luckily, as the days grow shorter and temperatures drop, there are plenty of shops, cafés and other indoor diversions to warm you up as you explore the neighborhoods below Houston.

To escape the morning's first blast of brisk air, treat yourself to a hot breakfast. The Kitchenette at West Broadway and Warren serves some of the City's best oatmeal and a full menu of American favorites such as homemade buttermilk biscuits and blueberry pancakes.

For a look at one of the most extensive collections of Native American materials and artifacts, head down to 1 Bowling Green to the Museum of the American Indian. The museum, the 16th belonging to the Smithsonian Institution, hosts more than 800,000 works of historical significance from all over the Americas and the Caribbean.

The Winter Garden at the World Financial Center (just west of West Street), where sunlight streams through a 2,000-plus glass paneled ceiling, is a soothing spot to people watch, shop and snack. This Battery Park City landmark, which reopened on September 17, 2002, hosts music and other performances day and night.

Leave your diet out in the cold in favor of what is possibly the world's best hot chocolate. MarieBelle, on Broome Street, offers fine treats and chocolates in a welcoming French bistro setting. Founder Maribel Lieberman makes her four hot chocolate flavors (Aztec

original, dark, spicy and mocha) using pure Belgian cocoa beans, richly served in small espresso-sized cups.

Once you're out of the hot chocolate haze, head to the Strand Bookstore annex at the South Street Seaport. The annex offers millions of books on just about any subject, all on one very large floor. Careful, a quick visit could turn into an hours-long stay.

Stop into Tents & Trails on Park Place near City Hall for warmth you can wear. You don't have to be a hardcore outdoorsman to appreciate this 43-year-old store's extensive inventory of outerwear and camping gear. But in the City's next big snowstorm, you might be glad you know where to find it.

Eden Day Spa on Broadway at Walker Street promises to not only warm you up, but loosen you up too. A 60-minute detour there for a deep-tissue massage, body treatment or facial will bring you boundless tranquility—and relief from chills and stiffness.

Down a few blocks on Baxter just south of Canal is Nha Trang, one of the best restaurants for Phở (pronounced "fuh"), the traditional Vietnamese rice noodle soup. Stop in for a warm bowl with beef, seafood, vegetables and more, complemented with a savory curry chicken dish or a more exotic plate of soft shell crab, squid or even frog legs.

After the sun sets, head west to check out what's showing at the Screening Room on Varick just below Canal. One of New York's most charming movie theaters, the Screening Room typically runs new movies and old favorites until late at night. And when the curtains close, you can retire to the restaurant and bar to talk cinema and sip a hot toddy that will brace you for the chilly night air. 



WHERE TO SHAKE OFF THE WINTER CHILLS

Kitchenette	80 West Broadway	www.kitchenettenyc.com	(212) 267-6740
Museum of the American Indian	1 Bowling Green	www.nmai.si.edu	(212) 514-3700
Winter Garden	250 Vesey Street	www.worldfinancialcenter.com	(212) 945-2600
MarieBelle	484 Broome Street	www.mariebellechocolates.com	(212) 925-6999
Strand Bookstore	95 Fulton Street	www.strandbooks.com	(212) 732-6070
Tents & Trails	21 Park Place	www.tenttrails.com	(212) 227-1760
Eden Day Spa	388 Broadway	www.edendayspa.com	(212) 226-0515
Nha Trang	87 Baxter Street		(212) 233-5948
Screening Room	54 Varick Street	www.thescreeningroom.com	(212) 334-2100

DID YOU KNOW? TRINITY CHURCH



Long before throngs filled Times Square to watch the ball drop, the tolling bells of Lower Manhattan's Trinity Church rang in the New Year. Huge crowds would gather around the tower in the dark winter night of New Year's Eve to observe one of the City's greatest 19th century traditions.

In 1894, believing that the din from the crowds had grown too great, Rector Dr. Morgan Dix ordered that the bell-ringing cease, a decision that met with vigorous protests from citizens and the newspapers. A year later the bells returned, but the single silent year was a sign of things to come. When the New York Times moved from Lower Manhattan to Times Square in 1904, the New Year's Eve celebration moved with it and has remained there ever since. 

TO LEARN ABOUT THE BEST PLACES TO RING IN THE NEW YEAR
DOWNTOWN LOG ON TO WWW.LOWERMANHATTAN.INFO