

NEWS

Alternatives for Christmas not hard to find

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It's just about time for the Christmas rush. It's a mad dash of trying to please everyone on your list while coming up with unique and personal gift ideas.

While some people have it down to a science, many have yet to master the skill. Still, after some extensive investigative reporting (i.e. shopping), a few treasures were found. All it took was some searching for smaller independent stores.

These stores offer alternatives to their big-box brothers. While they're sometimes hidden in streets downtown, Queen Street, Water Street, and Victoria Row are a good place to start. From there, the possibilities are endless.

That being said, here are some of the top picks for the upcoming holiday season:

1. Ugly Dolls – Truly the face only a mother could love, these dolls range in size and colour and are all the buzz in alternative stores. Each have their own personality – Cinko is afraid of water for example. They were inspired by a doodle but now have a life of their own. For a special touch, go to www.uglydolls.com and print off their life history. They have them in stock at Luna Eclectic Crafts and Gifts.

2. Second hand books – This is probably one of the hardest things to shop for, especially if you don't know what you're looking for, but they are a gift that will be appreciated. If you're not sure what to buy, booksellers can often steer you in the right direction.

John Underhay, Owner of The Reading Well, said many people come in looking for the perfect book for Christmas and everyone's needs are different.

"They're as broad as the books that are in here."

3. Swords and Bongs – These are two of the top picks by women shopping for men at Wild Impulse. Operator Tracey Dooley said one customer comes in every year to buy her husband a sword because it's completely impractical. As for the bongs, she said

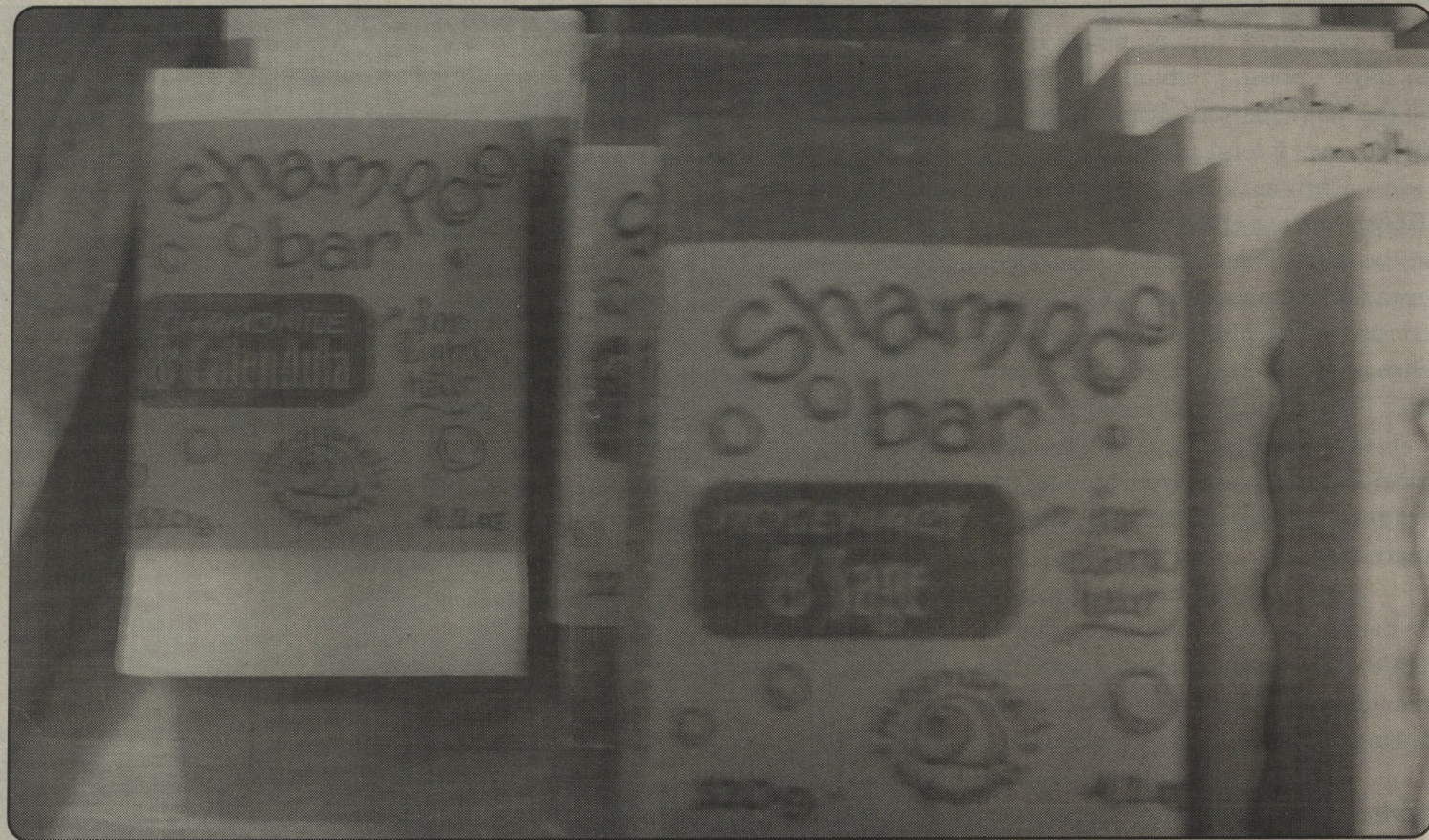


Photo By: Stacey Murray

shampoo bar: At roughly \$7, shampoo bars are sure to make someone smile and wash their hair.

most guys who get one for Christmas are grateful.

4. Fork and spoon bracelets – Not your everyday utensils, this gift idea gives a new life to a tired piece of cutlery. Shined to give it a nice finish, they also have beads coiled around them to give a more feminine touch.

5. Natural spa products – Many people are looking for natural alternatives, but won't buy them because they are more expensive than other brands.

Jennifer White, who works at Luna, said many people are looking outside-the-box for Christmas.

"It's nice to get something different because after a while you get the same old stuff."

Products range from soap and shampoo bars, as well as chamomile conditioners and other skin care and scented products.

It also gives men a chance experience something other than "whatever's in the shower" while not having to buy it themselves.



Photo By: Stacey Murray

Ugly dolls: These colourful creatures come with personality traits. They range from \$10-\$60.



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