

When shopping for a senior this holiday season, your gift will be a big hit if you focus on the practical, advises a local senior-care company.

“Seniors, as a group, have always been a frugal lot,” said Mary Jo Chatelain, owner of the Home Instead Senior Care® office serving the North Platte area. “Out of necessity or, perhaps, driven by fear, the economic downturn has made older adults even more practical. Social services budget cuts also have impacted the pockets of seniors, leaving some lacking the money for necessities.”

An analysis of more than 26,000 senior gift requests conducted by the Home Instead Senior Care® network throughout the U.S. reveals that the most popular holiday wishes of older adults are items such as blankets, slippers, pajamas and robes. A person can't go wrong with food or homemade gifts either, such as cards or holiday ornaments.

While seniors' needs for the basics have increased, so has the generosity of those who are giving gifts to older adults, according to the Home Instead Senior Care analysis. The study of the organization's offices that participate in Be a Santa to a Senior, an annual holiday gift-giving program, revealed that giving to seniors is up unanimously.

“We've found a lot of open and giving hearts are concerned about the senior population,” said Chatelain. “People have given above and beyond. I think there's a sense of the community pulling together in hard times.”

Popular Gifts for Seniors

- Blankets or throws

- Slippers and socks

- Toiletries such as lotions, bath soaps, cologne and perfume
- Pajamas and robes
- Food such as sausages, cheeses and chocolates
- Kitchen and bath towels
- Clothes such as sweat pants, sweaters and underwear
- Large-print books • Puzzles
- Cards and stamps
- Gift certificates to grocery and discount stores.

Don't forget companionship services.