



ELECTRONIC GIFT GUIDE

By Abby Berry

This holiday season, give the gift of tech! If you're searching for the latest gadgets and electronics to gift but don't know where to start, we've got you covered.

Here's a list of ideas for your tech-savvy friends and family members, and with a range of prices and interests, there's sure to be something for everyone.

Gifts for Those on the Go: We all have that one friend who never stays in one place, so they'll appreciate gifts that keep them charged and entertained while on the go.

A portable charger (or power bank) can keep their smartphones and tablets juiced, and the good news is this gift won't drain your wallet. You can purchase portable chargers online or at local retailers for as low as \$20. Typically, these compact devices can fully charge an iPhone three times before running out of steam.

A Bluetooth speaker is another great gift to keep those on the go entertained. Whether they're listening to their favorite tunes or watching the latest flick, Bluetooth speakers can clarify and amplify volume to satisfy any media enthusiast.



Prices range depending on features, but you can purchase a quality Bluetooth speaker online or at local retailers for as low as \$30.

Gifts for the Chef: Every foodie knows that temperature matters when mastering the perfect cut of meat. A Bluetooth-connected thermometer can help your chef ensure a delicious (and safe-to-eat) meal. Just download the associated app and keep an eye on the grill right from your smartphone or tablet. Prices vary from \$30 to \$200, but you can purchase these handy gadgets online or at any big box store, like Walmart or Target.

A digital kitchen scale is a must for any culinary pro. No more guessing—the easy-to-read digital screen ensures the exact weight or amount required for that perfect dish. Prices vary depending on the weight the scale can handle, but you can find a 13-pound maximum weight scale for about \$20 on Amazon.com.

Gifts for the Pet Owner: Let's face it—pet owners would be lost without their fur babies. Luckily, pet tracking products continue to advance, so pet owners can always keep a watchful eye on their furry friends. Most trackers simply attach to your pet's collar. Prices vary depending on the tracker's capabilities, but some features include water resistance, health monitoring, and exceptional battery life. You can purchase pet trackers online or at your local pet store.

Speaking of keeping an eye on pets, you can also purchase surveillance cameras for real-time monitoring—some cameras even allow you to toss treats to your furry friend while you're away. Additional features include a microphone (so you can talk to your pets), a built-in laser toy (for our feline friends), and the ability to snap a photo or take video from your smartphone.



Prices vary depending on the bells and whistles, but you can purchase a pet camera for as low as \$40 on Amazon.com.

With so many electronics available today, you're sure to find the perfect gift for your tech-savvy loved ones. Happy shopping!

Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation's landscape.

Business Spotlight

ENHANCING THE BEAUTY OF BOARDS

By Al Cornell

Those brown leaves on oak trees sang in the breezy sunlight of an early November afternoon. Most of the other hardwoods on these Driftless Area hill-sides had completed their transition to stark bulwarks against harsher weather. Even so, they composed a picturesque scene while their leaves began the process of returning to humus.

However, the components of that scene provide a commodity that enhances the interiors of many homes in Richland County and beyond. From hardwood timber harvests, we get a variety of lumber. Then beautiful cabinets, doors, furniture, and trim can enhance our living spaces.

In a way, the drive seemed too short as I wound down the valley, over the Bloom City Hill, and a short distance up Highway 56 to Waldner's Millworks. Perhaps you've made the drive from Gillingham to Viola and noticed their sign by their driveway.

The projects underway inside the 40X70 shop are testimony to the tastes of customers. Cabinets are being built from oak and walnut. Exquisite interior doors are being designed and constructed from shagbark hickory and other Wisconsin hardwoods. Wayne Waldner looks around at the projects underway and sighs, "The shop is too small."

Upstairs, a 20X70 space provides a showroom still transitioning into an area where clients can view cabinet styles

and eloquent door designs. There is also an office where daughter Alyssa, 22, does the books and works on sales.

In 1999, Wayne and Patti moved onto their four acres in Richland County. Wayne had the option to work from home for his McFarland job that he still holds. From watching his father as a child, he had always had an interest in woodworking. After dabbling in it as a hobby, he settled into making home furnishings.

When their two oldest sons took an interest in drawing household items out of rough-cut lumber, Wayne decided to venture into the woodworking business. With the addition of the shop and some modern tools three years ago, Josiah, 20, and Daniel, 18, are able to devote full time to crafting the wood products. The younger Adriel constitutes the primary cleanup crew, and, along with Joey and another Bernese Mountain dog, the welcome crew is extraordinarily friendly.

The REC line running up that valley supplies the energy to run those modern woodshop tools. The primary tool is a CNC. When Wayne called that machine a CNC, I asked, "Did you say C and C?" He responded, "No, CNC." And then he added, "Computer numerical control router."

With that tool, the accomplished woodworker can take his craft to the next level. As Wayne says, "It's a game



changer." With the proper input for the decided product, the CNC cuts out precise sections for constructing a cabinet. It eliminates a huge effort to cut every piece to exact measurements on a table saw. It can also create fancy designs like the elk scene on some of the doors. Of the many designs to choose from, their website adds a moose, pheasants, and wild turkeys.

Another major tool is the shaper. Operating in part on information put into its computer, it shapes door and cabinet parts. In another area, boards are glued and clamped into desired widths.

Current projects occupy portions of the shop. Those shagbark hickory doors reveal the beautiful grain and attractive knots of that extremely hard wood. Other areas are occupied by a bathroom vanity and kitchen cabinets in the making.

Waldners purchase rough-cut hardwood lumber and resaw, size, and plane it. Most comes from Wisconsin hardwoods. Some is grown right here in the hills of Richland County. Lumber has been acquired that came from logs that were purchased by Rockbridge Sawmill and Nelson Hardwood Lumber.

Since the new shop opened three years ago, business has expanded rapidly. The majority of the business is generated by word of mouth. Satisfied customers are the best sales reps. Sometimes Waldners run an ad in the Shopper.

Their website, www.WaldnerMillworks.com, is frequently the first place people go to view their products and see the quality workmanship. However, if you are thinking about adding any of the products they craft, stop in for a showing. If you appreciate dogs, Joey would love to stick his cold nose on your hand and roll his dark lovable eyes up at you.



The doors, cabinets, and other household items built at Waldner's Millworks show the grains of the hardwoods they're made from. Some items feature specially cut designs such as the elk scenes on the doors above.



MAY YOUR HOLIDAY SEASON BE MERRY AND BRIGHT

The holidays are a time of year that many of us eagerly anticipate. The season is marked by special foods, seasonal decorations, and lots of festivities.

We cherish carrying on old family traditions and enjoy creating new ones. For us, we look forward to more time spent with family and friends.

However, given the hustle and bustle of the season, the holidays can also offer an opportunity to slow down and reflect. All of us at Richland Electric Cooperative are grateful for you, the members of the co-op.

You see, one of our founding principles as a co-op is “Concern for Community.” While our main focus is providing safe, reliable, and affordable energy, we want to give back. We want to help our community thrive.

Reflection In looking back at this past year, we’re grateful that we were able to make a positive impact in the community through programs and activities such as Youth Leadership Congress, the light parade, and the member appreciation pic-

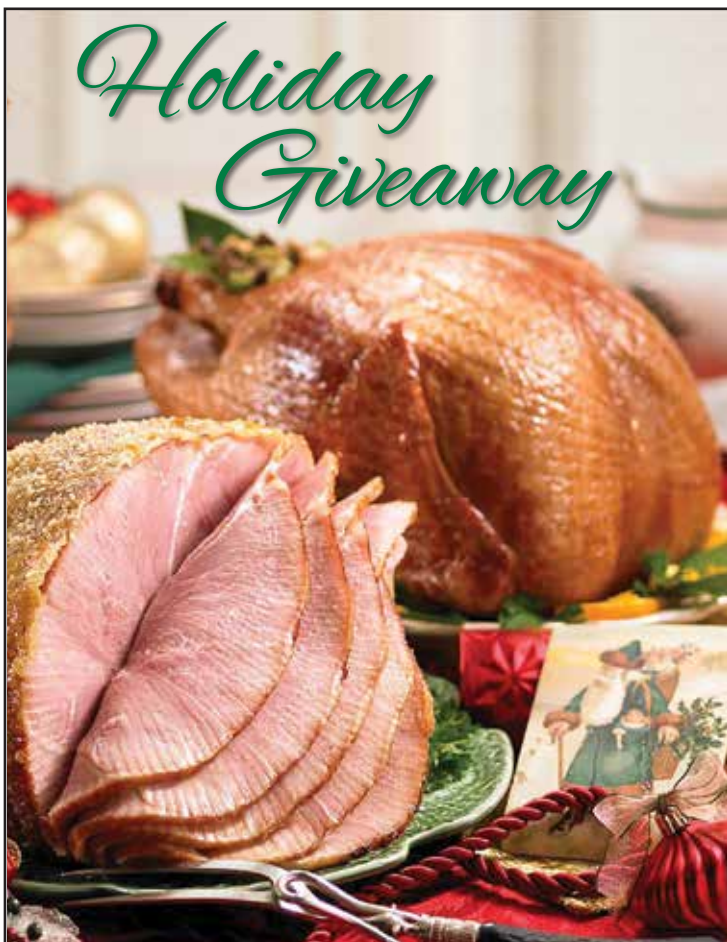


nic. We continue to work closely with our local high schools to award college scholarships. In 2019, we awarded over \$3,000 to local scholars.

There are other ways we can help the community as well. Whether we’re providing information about our Transition Energy program, or helping you find ways to save energy at home, we want you to know we’re here to help.

Looking Ahead Looking ahead to 2020, we hope you will share your opinions with us. We recognize that our members have a valuable perspective, and that’s why we continually seek your input. Whether through community events, our social media channels, or the annual meeting, we want to hear from you. We are led by you—the members of the co-op—and we depend on your feedback.

As we prepare for next year, we look forward to the opportunity to serve you and the greater community. On behalf of the Richland Electric Cooperative family, we hope your holidays are indeed merry and bright!



We are getting into the holiday spirit by doing a holiday give-away! This year we will be giving away a ham or turkey to two lucky winners for Christmas. The ham and turkey will be prepared by the Richland Locker. Just fill out the form below and bring it to the REC offices. The drawing will take place on DECEMBER 13. The winner will be able to pick their prize up directly from the Richland Locker. Prizes must be picked up December 18!

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE # _____

ACCOUNT # _____

EMAIL _____

Return this form to Richland Electric Cooperative, 1027 N. Jefferson St., P.O. Box 439, Richland Center, WI 53581.



RECALLING NOVEMBERS PAST

November at our country school meant recognizing Armistice Day— November 11. At eleven o’ clock we all stood up and faced east, remembering the eleventh hour of the eleventh day in 1918, when “the war to end all wars” came to a halt.

In November we studied the Pilgrims’ first Thanksgiving, making cutouts and pictures of Pilgrims, turkeys, squash, corn and pumpkins and using them to decorate the school room. We discussed what it must have been like at the first Thanksgiving, when the Pilgrims and Indians celebrated together.

At home we celebrated our Thanksgiving. We invited my Aunt Louise, whose husband had died several years earlier. We invited my Aunt Arvilla and her two boys, Ron and Bob.

Almost everything on our Thanksgiving dinner table had come from our farm: mashed potatoes, home-baked bread, boiled rutabagas, dill pickles, baked squash, canned corn, plus pumpkin and apple pies. Pa like cranberries, so we always bought some fresh cranberries.

I don’t recall that we ever had turkey for Thanksgiving dinner. We tried raising turkeys one year, but a fox prevented that from happening. Pa didn’t like turkey anyway, said the meat was too dry. His preferred Thanksgiving meat was roast duck, so most years we enjoyed that. We raised Muscovy ducks, which somehow we successfully protected from the predatory foxes and weasels. Ma raised 50 or so White Rock roasters that she sold to customers in Wild Rose. When roast duck wasn’t on the table, it was one of Ma’s plump roasters that she saved for Thanksgiving and for our Christmas dinner.

About three times a year Ma went all out in preparing meals— Thanksgiving, Christmas, and when the threshing crew arrived at our farm every August. Not that the rest of the meals weren’t special, they were, but these three meals were the most special.

In November, the first snow usually arrived in central Wisconsin, where our farm was located. Sometimes we’d get a sprinkling of snowflakes in October, but the real, ground-

covering snow, lasting until spring, usually arrived in November.

My brothers and I began asking Pa as early as the first week in November, “When’s it gonna snow, Pa?”

He’d smile and say, “Soon enough. Soon enough. Lots of work to do before it snows.”

Each morning we’d look at the sky as we walked to school, thinking about snowflakes and winter fun. One day, in mid-November, I remember the first snowflakes began fluttering down as we walked to school. The first snowflakes of the year were things of beauty, especially for country kids who enjoyed winter. The snowflakes landed on our Mackinaw coats and hand-knitted woolen mittens. They accumulated on the dead grass and fallen leaves along the road.

All morning, when we were supposed to be studying, we’d sneak a peek out the schoolhouse windows at the falling snow. We hoped that by noon the snow would be deep enough so we could lay out the first track for the fox and geese game that we played. (*Excerpted from Living a Country Year*)



For more about Jerry’s writing, go to www.jerryapps.com.

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