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51 Last-minute Gifts on U.S. 51

- Unique gifts on retailers' shelves

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Melanie Thortis | The Herald

Specialized gifts are sold at Nancy's Antiques & Lighting in Ridgeland.

Whether you're dashing, dancing, prancing or blitzing to finish up Christmas shopping, head up U.S. 51 before Santa Claus comes down the chimney.

Shop-at-home Santas can find plenty of goodies starting in Ridgeland and heading north - not as far as the Pole - but toward Canton on the local highway. Along the almost 20-mile stretch of road, there are a multitude of gifts for the food and drink connoisseur, cook, decorator, homeowner, golfer, antique lover, clothes horse, fitness buff, young and young-at-heart. There's even "snow" to be found for those dreaming of a white Christmas.

"If you couldn't travel anywhere but Hwy. 51, you'd be in a good spot," said Rosie Vassallo, director of Madison the City Chamber of Commerce. "You can do everything on Hwy. 51."

While there are numerous storefronts, restaurants and retailers presenting possible presents, here are 51 spots along 51.

At the southern end in Ridgeland, tee up at Golf Cars of Mississippi, at 235, to find a gas or electric golf cart on the list. For the hunters and fishermen on the list, there's Big Buck Sports, at 242.

At 291 U.S. 51, Solar Control of Jackson can dim the glare of Rudolph's nose or other fast-moving objects with a gift certificate for automotive window tinting.

Don't forget the essential ingredient to make all the kids' electronics work early Christmas morning. Interstate All Battery Center, at 243, has all the necessities to make toys come alive.

For the dancer, stop by Hudson's, at 379. A half off regular price, there are ballet slippers, tap shoes and jazz shoes, along with tutus, leotards and costumes for budding ballerinas and hoofers.

For children and adults, who want real life, bring home a tank of either fresh or salt water fish from The Fish Bowl in School Street Crossing, #398.

For those more interested in jewelry than jewel-toned fish, Village Beads offers ready-made jewelry or the lesson to make your own. Owner Ann Bankston said a \$20 gift certificate will cover the basics in a class where you will make a necklace and pair of earrings.

"It's a lot of fun. It's a very relaxing hobby to have," Bankston said.

School's out for two weeks but to help with study skills or tough subjects in the second semester, parents can consider a gift certificate to the Huntington Learning Center.

Wrap up the 51 shopping spree with a stop at The Gift Box, also in School Street Crossing. There's a large assortment of accessories to wrap presents and they also do a beautiful job wrapping your gifts for you.

For the cook on your list or just a person who likes to eat, The Choppin' Blok in Trace Station #500 can personalize a gift basket with coffees, Mississippi-made products, sauces, jellies, jams and glazes. To dazzle at Christmas dinner, there's china and silver at Judy C. Martin.

To destress while increasing strength and muscle tone, give a gift certificate to The Pilates Studio. Petals & Pails in the same center offers unique creations of flowers to brighten up a Christmas party. For a tastier eye-catcher, there's Edible Arrangements with strawberries, pineapples, apples and melons masquerading as flowers.

Just across U.S. 51, there's Nancy's Antiques & Lighting, glowing with the Christmas spirit. There are perfumes, lotions and bath sets aplenty, but the top selling item there is the creme brulee-scented pillar. The three-wick candle, a creamy yellow color, comes in a variety of sizes.

Don't forget the dog. Visit A Pretty Puppy, at 574, for toys or certificate for a pet grooming. Learn how to create a mosaic masterpiece at The Mosaic Shop, at 587 in the Oak Place Shopping Center.

For the comic connoisseur, there's Van's Comics & Cards in the Log Village. For those looking past Christmas to New Year's Eve, Angie's at 562 and Barbara's Boutique at 574 provide the styles for a range of ages.

Johnson Lawn & Outdoor Equipment, at 588, will make lawn work easier for dad come spring. Homeowners who want to improve their landscaping, not just cut their grass, can find growing possibilities at Garden Works, at 650.

Y'all T-shirts with various sayings and reasons to live in the South would make a good gift to send to those up North, and they can be found at Printables & More, #670.

Crossing into Madison, there's Simply Mignon's, at 751. Pick out an oil lamp in a decorative decanter and choose from a wide variety of scents, including the popular red currant, rain, New Orleans, kumquat, romance or patchouli.

A certificate for a new 'do can come from Molecules, at 794, in time for the new year.

Clothe the Ridgeland High Titan or Madison Central Jaguar on your Christmas list at J.S. Lupe's.

Give the gift of not cooking. Olivia's Food Emporium, at 820, can serve up everything from cheese balls or dips for holiday appetizers to side dishes like green bean or sweet potato casseroles to the main course of fried turkey.

"It's a one-stop shop," cook Sara Tolley said. "Santa's sleigh would be full if he came in here. We'll make anything for you. Call us and we'll have it ready for you."

Up the road at Madison Ace Hardware, #952, co-owner Adelbert Adcock said there's a gift for everyone here. For the kids, there are "toobs" or small figurines, either pirates, trains, forest creatures, horses or farm animals. "The cap goes off, the toys come out," he said. Browning Buckmark T-shirts in a variety of colors are popular with teenagers while dads might appreciate a pocket knife and mom a Circle E candle.

Give of gift of a healthy 2009. Year-long memberships in The Club, #953, or Courthouse Fitness, at 1022, will ensure a year filled with cardio workouts and weight-training.

From the Image Gallery, at 1036, employee Carol Norris suggests a Walter Anderson print. For something different, you can get it plain and allow the recipient to paint it in.

"Wine tends to be a good last-minute gift," said Peter Clark, owner of Madison Cellars, at 1038. Unsure what to buy, Clark said his staff can make suggestions. For those unsure about what champagne to toast the new year, Clark said there are small 187 ml bottles available, include Moet Chandon, which would sell for \$40 for a large bottle but only \$12.97 for the small.

Forget the cookies, what about a dozen doughnuts for Santa. The jolly ole elf can share the treats from the Donut Barn, at 1069, with his reindeer. There's also Funky Monkey there, offering T-shirts, totes, bracelets, throws and other gifts for the young, old and inbetween.

Madison the City Chamber of Commerce, at 1239, is offering a deal on a "Taste of Madison" card. For \$10, the card

allows the holder to buy one, get one free entree at Alexander's Italian Restaurant, Back Yard Burgers or Lenny's Sub Shop through Feb. 21.

In Gluckstadt, Kayce Saik of Relish Home Accents and Gifts, at 1716, suggests choosing from a variety of wooden crosses, made by a local craftsman, and adorned with a variety of embellishments from rusted appliques to copper decorations. Another option is a Japanese quince-scented candle from Seda France.

A-1 Nails in the same shopping center at the intersection of Yandell Road offers gift certificates for acrylic, gel, nature or solar nails or a silk wrap.

Journeying up 51 a little further can also mean a trip to the past. At Madison Antiques Market, at 2518, there are teapots, tea sets, cut glass, pressed glass, tables, armoires and more from a variety of time periods.

Once inside Canton proper, it may be called Liberty Street, but it's still U.S. 51 to Santa. Consider giving to someone you don't know. MadCAAP (Madison Countians Allied Against Poverty), at 3141, would appreciate donations of cash or canned goods for its food pantry to make the new year a little brighter for those struggling in today's economy.

Just across the street, a fireworks stand can provide the booming goods to bring in 2009.

On the Canton square, Joyce Street, owner of the Market Gallery, said a good certificate for custom art work will ensure the home decorator just the colors needed. She and her daughter create all the paintings, and Street creates what she calls "curly covers" metal work to enhance jar candles.

"We sell art work and free smiles," Street said.

In addition to the assortment of rings, peace sign bracelets, necklaces and sunglasses, merripennie's is selling snow powder. The box, at a cost of \$15, will make over a gallon of snow, just as soft as the real stuff. Just add water and it lasts for about a month. When it evaporates, scoop up the powder to use again and again.

Sulm's Gifts offers a variety of sizes of handmade ceramic crosses, decorated with fused pieces of glass. Another eye-catcher is a holiday T-shirt, referencing not the Three Wise Men but "Three Mississippi Girls would have asked for directions, arrived on time, helped deliver the baby, cleaned the stable, made a casserole, brought practical gifts and there would be peace on Earth."

The Cricket Box Framing offers 2009 Wyatt Waters calendars for the coming year. At the Alabaster Box, find a Mississippi Christmas ornament wishing "Merry Christmas Y'all." Chateau Home & Garden has a pine cone tea lantern in French Bronze, while Canton Variety has a framed photo of The King with the words "Elvis was a Beatnik."

Along U.S. 51 are three grocery stores. Stop in Mac's Fresh Market in Ridgeland and find either a red, white or marble poinsettia to bring some holiday cheer. At Piggly Wiggly in Canton, the staples of stocking fillers, oranges and nuts, can fill a shopping basket. At Kroger in Madison, shoppers can remember four-footed friends who don't have a home. Quality dog and cat foods, cat litter, paper towels and other cleaning supplies will be a welcome gift for the Ark, Madison's animal shelter that depends on donations to operate.

Also, don't forget that any number of bank branches are conveniently located along U.S. 51. Crisp bills, in a variety of denominations, always make for a one-size-fits-all gift that will never be returned.