Plan now to enjoy ‘simple’ holidays, says K-State family resource expert

Annual rush of holidays begins with Halloween

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Ready or not, here come the holidays.

Kansas State University family resource management specialist Elizabeth Kiss says the annual onslaught begins for many with Halloween and extends to Thanksgiving and Christmas and other December celebrations.

“And to that,” she said, “I would add a fourth: New Year’s Eve.”

“Retailers want us to be thinking about the holidays,” Kiss said. “They’re starting to stock holiday merchandise, so it’s a really good time to plan ahead and think how you would like to celebrate this year.”

Kiss encourages families to save money year-round to prepare for the end-of-year festivities, but whether they have done that this year or not, it’s not too late.

“What you could do is decrease your other spending right now and substitute your holiday spending for that,” she said. “Then, keep within the total monthly spending that you have been doing.”

Kiss called routine expenses – such as buying a daily cup of coffee or snack at a convenience store or bakery – ‘spending leaks.’ Instead, for the next few months, she suggests directing that money toward holiday expenses.

Then, she said, make a plan.

“To really get a handle on it, it’s okay to start by thinking or dreaming big,” Kiss said. “Then, get real.”

“Take a look at the things you might like to do and then really take a good, hard look at what your resources are. How much money do you want to spend, and how much can you really afford to spend? How much can your budget handle?”
By outlining a plan in early October, Kiss said consumers also give themselves an opportunity to take advantage of sales and other price discounts that retailers are offering.

Other tips that Kiss shared for managing holiday spending include:

- **Pay in cash.** “I do try to use cash because I can keep track of what I’m spending and I know what I have left. Some people may keep an envelope of cash or they keep their cash separate so that when they’re done, they’re done.”

- **Resist credit card offers.** Some stores may offer a 15% discount up-front, but consumers may not realize that they’ll pay more than that in interest if they don’t pay off the bill right away.

  “My thought about opportunities that are presented to save money is to understand what that means,” Kiss said. “What are the terms? Are you giving up privacy? How much are you giving to them in return for this discount.”

- **Shop locally.** While there may be great deals – and some time savings – found online, buying in your own community not only helps local businesses, but also potentially saves shipping costs.

  Planning ahead helps you know what items you can buy in your own town.

  “And, delivery times are extending this year,” Kiss said. “Because of that, you need to plan ahead and buying local can help with that.”

- **Consider what makes you happy.** Kiss said she has had conversations with her own family about decreasing the emphasis on gifts and increasing time spent together.

  “We are at an age where we really don’t need gifts anymore,” she said. “We like to spend time together; we like to have good food and bake. So we said, ‘why don’t we focus on that going forward.’”

“I do agree that things can be more enjoyable if we keep them simple and focus on the real point of the holidays,” Kiss said. “Ask yourself: Why are we doing it? What brings us the most pleasure? Those things don’t always cost money.”

Kiss and her colleagues in the College of Health and Human Sciences and K-State Research and Extension meet regularly to discuss emerging financial issues. To learn more about managing your money, visit their website on family finances.

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**FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS:** Links used in this story

K-State Research and Extension family finances, [www.k-state.edu/family-finances](http://www.k-state.edu/family-finances)
K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county extension offices, experiment fields, area extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus in Manhattan. For more information, visit www.ksre.ksu.edu

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