

## MATERIAL WORLD /

## Green Toys, Hopeful Beads, Pure Giving

**BEADS OF HOPE**

In Uganda, the word for hope is *suubi* — and the perfect name for a project that makes and sells strings of beads. The beautiful beads and necklaces are hand-rolled from old posters, magazines, and newspapers by a community-based organization of women, mostly widows displaced by Uganda's more than two-decade-long civil war. *Suubi*, a project created by the nonprofit Light Gives Heat, creates consistent weekly incomes in otherwise unemployable areas of the country. Your gift of the *Suubi* beads ([suubiafrica.com](http://suubiafrica.com)) helps Ugandan women provide for their families, and it ensures that weekly literacy and English classes are provided for these same women. The string of beads also is a beautiful piece of jewelry for a loved one that comes with a good story.

**GREEN TOYS THAT LAST**

The online catalog Hazelnut Kids ([hazelnutkids.com](http://hazelnutkids.com)) provides parents and educators with quality, handcrafted toys made from eco-friendly and sustainable products. That sounds a little heavy, but don't worry; these toys are pure nontoxic fun. These are castles and dollhouses, dolls and dress-up, and musical instruments and activity toys that will stay in families for generations. Hazelnut thinks a lot about long-term custodianship — under a program called "Trees for the Future," they plant one tree for every toy sold to customers.

**NUTS ABOUT KIDS**

All the giving and getting can make you hungry. Flanigan Farms in Culver City, California, ([flaniganfarms.com](http://flaniganfarms.com)) produces all-natural, no-additives-included nuts and trail mixes. The 1 to 1.5 ounce packets are just the right size for between-meal holiday snacking. And the Flanigan Farms school fund-raising program is a very welcome, healthful alternative to the chemical cookie dough and candy bars offered by many schools today.

**REUSABLE WRAPPING**

Make the wrapping of gifts part of the tradition with reusable bags for small and medium-sized gifts. At Ecorations ([ecorations.com](http://ecorations.com)), you can choose from a variety of reversible patterns, designed for everything from clothing (a box) to wine bottles (a sack). Their "Mixed Bags" offer collections of 8 to 11 different sizes — you choose the fabrics.

**THESE CHOCOLATES PROTECT CHILDREN**

More than a quarter-million children are forced to work in abusive labor conditions in West Africa's cocoa fields. In fact, the entire chocolate industry is notorious for its history of degradation, both environmental and human. Global Exchange pressures U.S. chocolate companies to source their raw materials from fair-trade farms. Donate to the cause of children everywhere, or purchase from their list of 100 percent fair-trade companies at [globalexchange.org](http://globalexchange.org).

**GIVING WITHOUT STRINGS**

How many of us would like to give something to a family or a friend, but hesitate because we don't wish the recipient to feel ashamed or indebted. The non-profit organization Giving Anonymously ([givinganonymously.com](http://givinganonymously.com) <<http://givinganonymously.com>> ) has come up with an ingenious solution. Here's how it works: you provide the name and address of a person and the amount of money you wish to give, and Giving Anonymously writes a check for the exact amount. Donors receive confirmation when their gift arrives, and recipients can leave a thank you note through the organization's voice mail. A copy of the thank you is then sent by email to the donor.

According to the IRS, a person is allowed to give up to \$13,000 in 2009 (\$26,000 as a couple) to any number of people without facing gift taxes. What this means is that you could give a dozen different people each a check for \$13,000 and none of it would be subject to tax nor would it need to be declared on your tax return.

As Giving Anonymously states on their Web site: "We wanted to relationally connect people through giving, to make it fun, and in the process protect relationships from feelings of obligation. Giving to others in need can be full of mixed motivations and our hope is to facilitate Pure giving."