

Give gifts a personal touch

By Michele Lea Biaso - Danbury Newstimes

Published November 1, 2004

When Sherrie Tompkins' birthday rolled around last year, she was excited to see what her boyfriend had gotten her.

She longed for an engagement ring and was convinced that was his present.

But when she opened his gift, she didn't get a ring – she got a reality check.

"He gave me a membership to a gym," said Tompkins, 27. "It was the most horrible moment ever."

Tompkins isn't alone. Other guys and gals in the Danbury area say they've gotten – or given – horrible gifts of their own.

Tim Schlinger said one of his former girlfriends bought him tickets to a play for his birthday.

"I was like, um, thanks," the 34 year-old Newtown resident said. "And then I suffered through a night of some boring play she had wanted to see."

Michelle Sterling, a personal shopper with national image consulting firm Global Image Group, said that's a common mistake people make when buying birthday gifts.

"People need to stop buying things for other people that they want for themselves," she said.

Gary Kisinger said he is guilty of doing just that. The 26 year-old Danbury resident said he bought his girlfriend a laptop for her birthday.

It was more like a gift for himself.

"She didn't really want one," he said. "But I did."

Sterling said men love to buy electronic gifts that women just don't want.

"Men appreciate getting gifts like that and women don't," she said. "Men like functional gifts, women like sentimental gifts."

Rather than getting her the latest and greatest gadget, Sterling recommends something more along the lines of jewelry.

"You can never go wrong with jewelry," she said.

She doesn't recommend trying to buy clothes for your lady.

Besides the dreaded problem of getting the right size, she thinks men have no clue about style.

"They always pick out the ugliest things," she said.

Trent Parklow said he never knows what to get for his girlfriend, Megan, and gets really



Jewelry is often a good gift for females.

stressed about it.

The 19-year-old Carmel, N.Y., resident waits until the last minute and ends up getting her something she doesn't like.

"She would never say she didn't like it," he said. "But just once I would like to get her something I was proud of."

Sterling said that's easy.

First, don't go to Best Buy to purchase a present for girlfriend and don't go to the Candle Shop to buy something for your man.

Just start paying attention. "Listen to what they ask for," she said. "Take notes if you need to."

Lisa Hulseapple follows that plan. She starts planning for her husband's birthday months in advance and writes things down as he mentions them.

"When he opens them he is always like 'How do you do it?'" she said.

Another thing men need to remember is to not wait until the last minute.

"They need to learn how to shop in advance," Sterling said. "Waiting until the last day limits your time to buy the right thing."

When in doubt, she said to get a gift certificate. "Then they can pick something out themselves."

No matter who you are buying for, Sterling recommends adding a nice card with something sweet inside.

"It adds such a personal touch," she said.

Buying a birthday gift for anyone shouldn't be a stressful time, she added. "Just be aware of the recipient and give them something reflective of who they are," she said. "There is no bigger compliment than when somebody pays attention."