

## 'Tis the Season for Children's Holiday Arts Projects

Make this holiday season a festive one with creative arts activities that children can do at home. Kids will enjoy the fun and easy projects that they can use as decorations or give as gifts.

"Nothing makes the season more special than spending time with family," said John D. Kemp, CEO of Very Special Arts. "Fun arts projects that parents can do with kids add special meaning to the holidays and make gifts and decorations more special than any you can buy."

Very Special Arts recommends the following holiday arts activities designed for young children:

- **ALL IN THE FAMILY!** Making puppets for holiday story games: Cut out and paste photos of family members on popsicle sticks and add other decorations to make puppets. Begin by telling a story about your family with the puppets. Encourage your child to tell their part of the story. Use stories of family celebrations and everyday activities. Encourage your child's participation by asking questions such as "What happened next?" and "What do you think the person did then?" Display the puppets with your holiday decorations.

- **WRAP UP THE SEASON!** Creating handmade gift paper and holiday cards: Provide your child with water-soluble markers, crayons or paint and large sheets of paper. Encourage your child to draw a self-portrait or paint a picture of his or her favorite holiday activity. Kids can also cut simple shapes out of heavy sheets of folded paper to create a stencil. Open the stencil, place over another sheet of paper and color in the designs using markers or crayons. Help children write their own holiday message on the paper to practice writing and spelling skills. Children can then use the paper to wrap gifts or fold to make their own greeting cards.

- **KEEPSAKES FOR KIDS!** Creating a holiday book: To capture special memories, help your child create a holiday book. Provide sheets of paper, colored markers, brushes and washable paints. Turn the paper sideways and fold in half to form a book. Join your child in drawing pictures of holiday memories or family events. Guide your children in writing simple words or sentences to describe the drawing and then read their writing aloud to practice verbal skills.

- **BELLS AND WHISTLES!** Drumming up the sounds of the holidays: Have kids pick a favorite holiday song and produce the rhythm to accompany the song using homemade instruments. Use pots, pans and coffee cans to double as cymbals and drums, and add pencils and chopsticks with their ends wrapped with rubber bands for the drumsticks. To simulate the sound of bells, try a variety of bottles, partially filled with water, and tap them gently with pencils. Kids can sing along, then talk about the sounds and why the song is special to them.