

Fanciful February

Heartfelt Sentiments That Really Hit Home



Valentine's Day, birthdays and anniversaries are great occasions to do a little something extra for the special people who brighten our lives. This Valentine's Day, why not mix things up a bit and, instead of giving the traditional flowers or chocolates, say "I appreciate you!" with a few inventive projects that will fill your home—and their hearts—with a little love.

Like so many of us, you probably have a nagging to-do list at home that never seems to get done. As a gift idea, find something that's symbolic of each task, wrap it up, and give it to your partner with a note promising to get it done. Remember to follow through!

Your creativity and commitment to tackle those "to-dos" should work magic on your mate and make life a little simpler in the process! Oh, and feel free to throw a box of chocolates in, too!

Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. **Closet control.** You will find lots of handy closet-organizing tools at your local home improvement center. Whether you use easy-to-install wire components or hire a professional service to build a more permanent solution, having a place for everything in your closet should put a smile on your loved one's face.
2. **Drop the drip.** Fixing a leaky faucet will not only eliminate a minor irritation, but it also will save countless gallons of water each month. The repair often is simply a matter of replacing a washer or "O" ring. Check with your local handyman or home improvement center for the best fix.
3. **Make it rain.** Update your old showerhead with one of today's top-of-the-line models. It will turn your daily shower into an oasis that reminds your partner how very much you care!
4. **Bop while you chop.** Install an under-the-cabinet stereo/CD player in the kitchen so your partner can enjoy tunes while preparing meals.
5. **Update his workspace.** Wow him with a garage or workroom makeover, just don't move the tools!. Add a TV or stereo, or create a mini-fridge or coffee pot corner. If you're unsure of what he would like, wrap up a home improvement center gift card so he can update his pegboard or get the new saw he's been eyeing! Making his space a great place makes for a happy mate!
6. **Bloom where you're planted.** Take a day to re-mulch landscaped areas, plant seasonal flowers and spruce up your front door area! A fresh look is sure to brighten everyone's day.
7. **Maid to order.** Take your spouse away for a little rest, relaxation and pampering. While you're gone, send a cleaning service in to scrub those floors, buff up those bathrooms and refurbish the refrigerator.

Even if you're not handy around the house, there are plenty of local contractors who would be happy to cost-effectively check some of the headaches off of your to-do list! You also can find helpful resource books and guides at your local home improvement center.



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**Volume 9,
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Promoting a Love of Reading

Helping the children in your life develop a love of reading is a gift that they will carry throughout their lives. It will pave the way for greater success in school, at work and in most every aspect of their lives. It might even become a seed that they plant when they have children of their own.

Here are some simple ways to build good reading habits in the little people you love:

1. **Make it easy.** Fill your home with a variety of books and magazines on topics that interest your children. Encourage them to read the back of the cereal box at breakfast, the street signs as you're driving and the cookbook while you're preparing dinner.
2. **Find the fun.** Have your youngsters peruse the events section of the local newspaper for family activities that you all might enjoy. Read the comics together, and try your hand at the puzzle sections.
3. **Make 'em laugh.** If reading stories doesn't spark their interest, try riddle or joke books. Print the lyrics to their favorite silly songs, and help them write some of their own.
4. **Take it on the road.** Make weekly (or at least monthly) trips to your local library or book store to encourage reading adventures. Many places have readings, author visits and other kid-friendly promotions that keep it exciting, fresh and—most of all—fun!
5. **Go online.** No matter what sparks your children's interest, you can find websites or resources on the internet. Whether they are pet lovers, future space travelers or budding artists, there is a site for EVERYTHING! Be sure to install parental controls, and visit the sites before your kids do to ensure the content is age appropriate.



Creamy Chocolate FONDUE

- 12 oz. milk chocolate or semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

Make a platter of fruits and fun dippers before melting chocolate. Here are some ideas:

- banana slices
- pineapple chunks
- whole strawberries
- apple slices
- kiwi fruit
- pear slices
- pretzel rods
- pound cake pieces
- marshmallows
- shortbread fingers



Carefully begin melting chocolate chips in a heavy-bottomed saucepan over low heat. As chocolate melts, slowly add cream, stirring constantly until mixture is smooth. Add vanilla, and transfer to a fondue pot. Use fondue forks to spear and dip your special treats. Yum!

Real Estate tips

brought to you by
Mandie M. Spudich



Understanding the meaning of "agent" is the first step toward success...

Real estate transactions rank among the most important financial moves that most people will ever make. As a real estate professional, I understand this and want you to be fully aware of your representation options.

In real estate, "agent" refers to the nature of the fiduciary responsibility that exists between you and your chosen real estate professional. Having a complete understanding of this relationship is the first step toward working together to achieve your real estate goals.

A real estate professional becomes your agent only after a legally-binding document is signed by both parties. As your agent, that REALTOR® has a legal obligation to protect your best interests in every facet of the transaction.

Real estate professionals traditionally worked as agents of the seller, not the buyer. Their loyalties and responsibilities were only to the seller. REALTORS® working with buyers acted as "sub-agents" of the seller.

That has changed. Today's buyers often retain real estate professionals to represent their own financial and legal interests when purchasing a home. The term is "buyer's agent."

Whether you're a buyer or a seller, call me today to learn more about the benefits of having an agent on your side for all of your real estate transactions.

CALL TODAY FOR A FREE:

- Comparative Home Analysis
- Merchandising Review
- List of Properties
- Mortgage Options Analysis
- For Sale By Owner Kit
- LISTING GUARANTEE

TAKE FIVE! Handy Household Tips

- 1. Colander cleanup!** Lightly coat the colander with some non-stick cooking spray before using it to drain your pasta or potatoes.
- 2. Clean grill trick!** Use crumpled heavy-duty aluminum foil as a fast, disposable way to clean your grill without a brush. Just scrub and toss!
- 3. Crack the code!** For stubborn, hard-to-open bottles such as vinegar or ketchup, break out your trusty nutcracker. The grips are perfect for smaller caps.
- 4. Winter flea foe!** Sprinkle a thin layer of Borax laundry booster on carpets. Allow to sit for at least an hour, then vacuum. This inexpensive trick helps keep fleas at bay.
- 5. Static stopper!** Keep a dryer sheet in your car, purse or desk drawer. When static is an issue, simply rub the dryer sheet across your clothes a few times to make it disappear. This trick also can be used on hair to tame flyaways.





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I'm here to take your dreams from Concept to Close!

Passion & Purpose

It is often said that success comes from loving what you do. It is measured in the lives that you touch, the memories that you make and the positive influence that you have on the world around you.

Your business, your friendship and the ability to help families just like yours is the passion and purpose that drives me to succeed each day.

This month, I wish you passion and purpose. This life is meant to be lived to the fullest—experienced by being in the game, not on the sidelines. Amazing adventures await. Take them, as well as the joyful moments where the world is quiet, and you find yourself with peace of mind.

Thank you for all that you are to me. I relish the opportunity to answer your questions, guide your real estate decisions and honor your trust by caring for your referrals with the same integrity that I show in caring for your business.

Have a safe and happy February!



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