As everyone is gearing up for the holiday season and thinking about shopping and gifts for family and friends, I am reminded of several reasons to shop and buy locally; it is an investment in our great community, it helps create jobs, it supports community non-profit organizations, uses less gas thus reducing environmental impact, and you get better service from local businesses. A healthy business makes for a healthy community…consider supporting our Penfield businesses this holiday season.

Over the next several weeks I will share some tips from EAP of Rochester on how to beat holiday stress. First, “don’t lose the meaning.” If consumerism has you down, check out for a while with inspirational literature and reconnect with what makes the holidays special and important. Next, “get on the same page with family.” Come to a consensus on what activities are most important and cut out the extras that add work and scheduling pressure. Lastly, “take a time out.” Indulge in things you stopped doing because you just don’t have time anymore, like a long lunch or a night out with friends.

While we have had a wonderful run of mild weather, winter is just around the corner. Each year we hear of a person or family impacted by carbon monoxide which can be deadly. Here are a few tips for this heating season. Consider having a professional check your heating systems, chimneys, flues and vents once a year. Use CO detectors and understand and follow manufacturer’s instructions when using supplemental heat sources such as space heaters and emergency generators. Never use a gas stove, oven or charcoal grill as an indoor heat source. Anyone who suspects a carbon monoxide problem should get up, get out and call 911.

The Assessor’s Office reminds me that they have begun to mail “enhanced STAR and senior citizen exemption renewals” for the 2012 assessment roll. The letter details what income information you need to bring with you to the Assessor’s Office along with your renewal form. This information is due back to the Assessor’s Office no later than March 1, 2012. All other exemption renewals will be mailed in early December for the March 1 closing date. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact the Assessor’s Office at 340-8610 or log on at www.penfield.org, click on ‘departments’ then on ‘Assessor’s Office.’

As I have driven around the town over the last week, I note that many homeowners are piling leaves in the gutters and on the catch basins, a practice that creates drainage problems for homeowners and neighbors. Please be sensitive to this situation and drainage consequences from heavy rains and melting snow.

If you are reading this column before Friday, December 2 at 5:30 PM, it is not too late to enjoy the “all you can eat” pancake and sausage dinner. Don’t cook or call for take-out—come and enjoy the fun at the Community Center for dinner, music and more!

The Penfield Recreation Department will start accepting lodge and shelter reservations for 2012 on Thursday, December 1 at 10:30 AM in person and online (please note they will not accept phone reservations). Our lodges and shelters are very popular, so make your reservations early so you are not disappointed.

Important dates and events in history: December 4, 1619 – The first Thanksgiving is celebrated.

For December, www.nyrecycles.org reminds us…Merry Reuse and Happy Recycling! Have a green holiday!

Until next week, be well and be safe!

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