

We have started a tradition in our neighborhood of exchanging gifts with neighbors. This started by being invited to each other's homes during the holiday season to have treats. When you would go a hostess gift was taken along. Over the years this snowballed into buying presents for each family member of each of the six neighbors. It was to the point that we were spending a great deal of money and also running out of ideas of what to buy. We decided at a block party in September that we would no longer do this. Instead we would put the six names of the family into a hat and exchange names. Whose ever family you drew you would buy one gift under thirty dollars for the entire family.

At the time this seemed like a great idea and a way to save time and money in shopping for the holidays. When we drew names we drew a family that has been the hardest for us to buy for in the past. They have an abundance of board games as well as games to play in the yard. They also have a huge video library. These had been ideas floating around in my head as being great gifts for some of the other neighbors. I was looking through a gift catalog and saw an advertisement for custom floor mats. The mats were available for indoor or outdoor use and came in three different sizes as well as a variety of backgrounds. I thought this would be a perfect gift because one of the selections for the custom floor mats was to have the family's name put on it as a welcome mat.

I showed the picture of the custom floor mats to my husband and sons and they agreed that it would make a nice gift. This family has a Labrador retriever so we decided to get the mat that had this breed of dog featured as the background and then to have the neighbor's last name printed on it. At their house they use the back door as their main entrance. The entry way has a small mudroom area so the rug would fit perfectly in this area. I sent for the custom floor mat and was very pleased with the product. It was high quality and it seemed that it would wear well. It also fit right into the price range that had been established.

We all gathered at one neighbor's home to exchange the gifts and to have holiday goodies. The neighbor's that we bought for loved the rug. Several of the other neighbors inquired how they could get one for their home. Exchanging family names was a great way to reduce stress around the holidays.