

Web site runs elaborate Secret Santa gift exchange

December 17 2009, By JESSICA MINTZ , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- 'Tis the season for heart-melting tales of spontaneous good will among strangers, which, like the rest of our relationships, has gotten a lot more convenient since the advent of the Internet.

A few weeks ago, a seasonal discussion began on Reddit, where people post links and vote to move stories higher or lower in the site's rankings.

Anyone interested in a Secret Santa gift exchange? Ho Ho YES, came the answer.

More than 4,500 Reddit members in 54 countries signed up. They were given a Reddit user name and mailing address, and sometimes a note from the recipient-to-be about likes and dislikes.

As gifts arrived and recipients posted photos and thank-you notes online, it became clear that Reddit has become, to these folks at least, much more than just a [news site](#).

Erik Martin, a community manager at Reddit, said many Secret Santas appeared to have pored over the history of links and comments their recipient had posted on the site for clues that would yield the perfect gift idea. Some took it a step further and did what Martin calls "a little friendly Internet stalking," looking up addresses to get recipients' real names and tracking down their friends on Facebook.

Judging by notes and photos posted by recipients, Secret Santas did

good. Many [gift](#) packages included items reflecting popular Internet topics such as bacon, narwhals and zombies. Many, many others involved handmade replicas of Reddit's mascot - a little alien guy - rendered in blown glass, clay, metal, beadwork, felt, paint on canvas, carved soap, yarn and more.

The suggested amount to spend was \$15, but some Santas went far beyond that. One Santa kicked off a fund drive on Reddit so that the recipient's girlfriend could set aside emergency veterinary care money for her new service dog.

Another sent a volume of the teen-vampire series "Twilight," which disappointed the recipient until he opened it up and discovered two movies and an iPhone - yes, a working [iPhone](#) - tucked into cut-out sections of the book.

Yet another anonymously sent \$1,500 in \$100 bills, with a note that said, "Merry Christmas, hopefully this will help with books next semester ;)"

On the Net: <http://www.redditgifts.com/gallery>

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