

As we have finally settled into winter, these cold, rainy days keep us and the children inside. Let's face it, we spend entirely too much time in front of the television, computer or playing video games.

Now is a good time to put some color in your life and get out your box of art supplies.

But how safe are these products?

I opened my paint box collected over the years from art classes and even older items from garage sales. I found that I have calligraphy inks, watercolors, and acrylic paints that are less toxic to use and generally clean up with water instead of turpentine.

Ask Umbra from the Daily Grist (www.dailygrist.org) reported on art supplies and what to watch for when buying for children.

"The reason kids' supplies are differentiated from adult supplies is that adult art stuff often relies on harmful ingredients. Paint dyes can contain heavy metals; there are solvents in paint, glue, and markers; modeling clays contain vinyl; powders and sprays pose inhalation hazards, etc. Obviously all these problems aren't so great for grownups either, but we are larger, don't randomly eat our toys, and have the option of turning on ventilation, wearing protective gear, and making our own choices about danger."

For all art supplies, look for the AP NONTOXIC circle on the label. This is the ACMI (Art & Craft Materials Institute) certification. Do not buy any art supplies with a Warning, Caution, or Danger label. For a helpful list of kid-friendly art supplies go to www.watoxics.org/safer-products.

Crayons are generally nontoxic and made from of paraffin (read petroleum) wax and pigment. Soybean paraffin crayons are more earth-friendly.

Glue sticks and Elmer's glue has replaced the rubber cement and model glues of our youth. I wonder how we survived?

A healthy craft kit for kids could include children's crayons, colored pencils, glue sticks, white glue, water-based markers, water-based children's paints, colored paper, fabric, yarn, stamps, water-based ink pads, scissors (age-appropriate), and adhesive tape.

If you are putting together an art kit for a

toddler, you may want to include a smock, miniature drop cloth, and several large sponges.

Check out VALCORE's ReUse barn for free supplies. We encourage artists to drop off unneeded supplies to share with the community. Call ahead or check their website for current inventory.

The last and most important item in your art supply gift is to include your time making art with this child. Toddlers and young people need companions to encourage, teach, and assist them. And people of all ages need some low-pressure art time.

To close the circle, just in case you want to recycle some practice art work, here are some guidelines. The bulk of all art work cannot go into your recycling bin with your office paper and junk mail. Paper recyclers are not set up to remove crayons, paints, tape, low-grade construction paper and the like. Art work created with inks, water-based markers, and colored pencil on copy paper can go into the recycling bin. If you are a composter, you can shred some of the other rejects and add to your backyard compost pile.

CSA update

River Dog Farm of Guinda (Yolo County) delivers boxes of organic produce every Thursday in Fairfield. For information call (530) 796-3802 or email csa@riverdogfarm

Don't Miss Out

To all my faithful Times-Herald readers who want to share this column with friends and relatives outside the area, you can sign up to get this column via email. Send your request to asortedaffair@VALCORErecycling.org. This column is also online at the website below and on www.recycle-guide.com.

*VALCORE Recycling Board Member Jane Bogner's "A Sorted Affair" is published every other week in the Times-Herald. For recycling information call VALCORE Recycling at 645-8258 or visit www.VALCORErecycling.org.
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