

Looking for quick cash for holidays?

By Nicole Hutcheson, Times Staff Writer

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Don't feel like writing thank-you notes? Too tired to pick up after the dog? For a little money, people will do these things for you. A Craigslist user will write those obligatory missives for 75 cents a card. A Creative Loafing ad promises that for \$13 someone will poop-scoop your yard twice a week. As Christmas lists roll in and savings accounts dwindle, people are increasingly searching for ways to make a quick buck. "If you have hobbies or skills that people say you're good at — for example, arts and crafts or baking or catering — those are things that you can do to make money," said Harrine Freeman, a financial adviser who has been featured in *Essence* magazine's Work and Wealth section. But before you jump feet first into a side hustle, put some thought into it. How much will the supplies cost? What kind of time do you have? Who will benefit from your services? Here are a few sure ways to make a little extra scratch for the holidays:

1. Sell your gold

Got gold? Jackie Simpson and her husband, Dave, want it. The couple goes around the state appraising gold jewelry for folks and paying them cash for their items. One example, for two small gold rings, a broken charm bracelet, bits of another bracelet and a locket, they were willing to pay about \$150. The Simpsons say business has picked up since the economic downturn. And with good reason. "If it's just stuff sitting around in your jewelry box, why not sell it?" asks Jackie, known as the Gold Party Lady. To reach her, call: 1-800- 900-9800.

2. Have a yard sale

A week ago, Patricia Ritter posted an announcement on Craigslist for a Weekend Multi-Family Yard Sale. Two other families in her New Port Richey neighborhood joined in. The Ritters made about \$300. Things that sold fast: cake decorating items, Christmas decorations, angels and ornaments. "It was successful and I hope that others will consider this a way to make extra money with items they no longer need or use," said Ritter, 48.

3. Clean out your closet

Places like Plato's Closet and consignment stores are itching for your gently-used clothes. So take a look in your closet. What aren't you wearing? A pair of used Gap jeans could earn \$5. Keep in mind that Plato's Closet sells to the younger crowd and Hollister is their biggest seller. A gently-used hoodie could get you anywhere from \$10 to \$12, said Karen Ragsdale, owner of Plato's Closet in Palm Harbor and St. Petersburg. "We may go through their items and even if we pull out five out of 20 items, that's some money they wouldn't get if they went right to Goodwill."

4. Sell plasma

If you're between the ages of 18 and 65 and weigh at least 110 pounds you can likely donate plasma. The only catch is it could take up to four hours for your first donation, depending on your body and how many people are waiting in line ahead of you. The more you give, the more you get. Your first and second donations will net \$20 each, the third time around is \$25, and the fourth time is \$30. But let's be clear: You aren't getting paid and saving lives. Plasma-for-pay is used to make everything from cosmetics to chemical reactants, according to Florida Blood Services, which takes plasma on only a donation basis.

There are few pay collection sites in the Tampa Bay area. A sure bet: DCI Biologicals, 5252 E Fowler Avenue in Tampa, (813) 849-9100.

5. Use your talents

After being laid off eight months ago, Ashleigh Sottile, a former HSN producer, decided to put her penchant for organization to work. Last month she put up a post on Craigslist offering to do household chores. On Thanksgiving she got a text message that said: "You need to come clean my house." But there have been more serious bites. Every other Monday she does a residential cleaning job that earns her \$15 an hour. "I'm sitting here thinking that I need some extra Christmas money and I've got friends who have full-time jobs and aren't able to get all their stuff done," said Sottile, of Palm Harbor. "So I thought, 'What can I do that I can make money now?' "

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