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**- The Dos & Don'ts of Holiday Gifting & Tipping -
Emily Post Institute offers proper tipping etiquette**

BURLINGTON, VT – You made your holiday gift list and checked it twice, but wait, did you remember the people that you don't normally think about – the ones who make your life run smoothly? You know, the nanny, the letter/newspaper carrier, the housekeeper, the dog groomer, the masseuse.

With so many service people in our lives these days, who do you tip? And how much and what do you tip? "In this economy, it is important to remember that holiday tipping is about saying thank you," said Lizzie Post, author of Emily Post's Great Get-Togethers, and one of The Emily Post Institute's resident holiday gifting gurus. "With a little planning and creativity, you can accommodate everyone on your list without breaking your budget." Depending on the services provided, you may want to give cash, a gift or both. "Some years, it's just not realistic to provide cash tips. In that case, I recommend selecting a relatively inexpensive, well-chosen gift accompanied by a hand-written thank-you note. It shows the person they are appreciated and that is what's most important."

Allyson Myers is Marketing Director at Lake Champlain Chocolates, a premium confectioner that sends a large volume of holiday chocolates during the gifting season. Ms. Myers notes that many customers like to include a personally chosen gift with their overall tip, even when they're giving mostly cash. "Cash can seem impersonal and sometimes a

little too easy. We've been perfecting the art of giving for 28 years and while some trends come and go, we've found that customers are always looking for thoughtful, tasteful gifts that are easy to give. Whether it's a small token of appreciation or a grand expression of thanks, a non-cash gift makes a 'thank you' more sincere and memorable. Almost everyone likes gourmet chocolate, so it's also a safe choice for tipping."

Keeping this in mind, here are a few tips from Lizzie Post and the gift-giving experts at The Emily Post Institute to make your gifting decisions a little easier this year:

- Give a holiday gift to people who provide you with a service on a regular basis. Here are three service categories to help guide your decisions:
 - They provide a daily or weekly service (think: garbage collector, newspaper and letter carriers): give a gift or tip with a total value between \$10-\$30.
 - Weekly or monthly service providers with whom you have a more personal relationship (hair stylist, housekeeper, doorman, babysitter, dog groomer, children's tutors), give a gift or cash equivalent equal to the cost of one or two visits.
 - For the people you can't live without, such as the nanny, your personal assistant or live-in housekeeper, the typical practice is to provide a holiday bonus of one to two weeks' pay, often accompanied by a gift.
- Consider how you normally compensate the recipient when debating between giving money or a gift. For example, you don't pay your child's teacher, so a small gift is fitting, but you pay your child's tutor, so a monetary gift is appropriate. If you don't feel comfortable giving only a monetary tip, consider accompanying it with an inexpensive gift. "We have many customers during the holidays purchase a box of chocolate truffles or a tin of gourmet hot chocolate to make these gifts more personal," said Myers.
- Be sure to check guidelines before giving gifts. For example, your USPS letter carrier can accept baked goods and a small gift valued under \$20, but is not allowed to accept cash, checks, gift cards and other forms of currency. The last thing you want to do is get your favorite carrier fired for giving them the wrong gift!

- To stay on budget, prioritize your lists. People who make the biggest difference in your life – the babysitter who can always come last minute when you’re in a pinch, or the personal assistant who has become your right hand – should be at the top of the list. If you can’t afford to give everyone a gift, homemade treats are always appreciated.
- Most importantly, any tip or gift should be accompanied with a thank-you note – preferably handwritten! “The note doesn’t need to be elaborate – two or three sentences will do the trick – but should sincerely express your gratitude for his or her hard work,” said Post.

For more information about Lake Champlain Chocolates, please visit

www.LakeChamplainChocolates.com.

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Preservative-free and Kosher-certified, Lake Champlain Chocolates are crafted in small batches from the finest quality chocolate and select natural ingredients including local Vermont cream, sweet butter, maple syrup and honey. The company offers a variety of gifts including super-premium chocolate covered fruits and nuts, chocolate truffles, chocolate gift baskets and its ever-popular Chocolate of the Month Club. Lake Champlain Chocolates are available online, by calling toll-free at 800-465-5909, as corporate gifts & wedding favors, at three company-owned retail stores in Vermont and nationwide at specialty food & gift stores and upscale hotels & inns.