

Northwest launches gift registry

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■ Service will let guests put money toward honeymoon, birthday, graduation travel online.

BY JOEL J. SMITH
The Detroit News

Justin Wood and his future bride are expecting the usual blender, toaster and dishes at their June wedding.

But the Troy assistant restaurant manager thinks couples will embrace the gift of air travel from Northwest Airlines' new gift registry program, announced Wednesday. The program works like a department store registry, but instead of purchasing a couple's selected gifts, guests pay toward a honeymoon or some other planned trip.

"It's really unique," said the 26-year-old. "I like the idea. It's great for people getting married and looking for help in paying the airfare for the honeymoon."

Northwest's gift registry is not aimed strictly at wedding gifts. It can be used for bridal or baby showers, birthdays, graduations and other events.

"It's a pretty good and novel idea," said Michael Bernacchi, a marketing professor at the University of Detroit Mercy. "In conjunction with high gas prices, the idea of giving the gift of travel is a wonderful idea. Northwest will draw some dollars from other gifting resources. Northwest will

reap benefits from this."

Northwest is following a program offered by Continental Airlines the past several years.

"A lot of couples are getting married a little later in their lives," said Roman Blahoski, a Northwest spokesman. "Many already have most household items you typically get for shower or wedding gifts. This is an opportunity to help pay for travel."

The minimum gift amount is \$25. Recipients receive an electronic voucher for travel.

Here's how the Northwest program works:

■ Individuals sign up for the free program through www.nwa.com/giftregistry. It requires a free WorldPerks frequent flyer membership.

■ Recipients register, type an introduction about where they plan to travel, why they want to go there and how much tickets cost. They can download photos for their page.

■ Users can create announcements, send thank-you notes and monitor page activities.

"It's a fantastic idea," said Terry Trippler, a travel expert with myvacationpassport.com in Minneapolis. "It's a win, win, win situation for everybody. Northwest hasn't met a revenue source they don't like."

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Travel industry analysts say Northwest's gift registry is not only a good idea, but a good new revenue source.

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