

**'CANDY HEARTS' STAMP TO DELIVER
SWEET MESSAGE OF LOVE IN 2004**

NECCO Plans Special Run of Candy Hearts Based on Stamp

WASHINGTON — The new Love postage stamp scheduled to be issued in January 2004 by the U.S. Postal Service will be adorned by two candy hearts delivering a short but sweet message: I ♥ YOU.

They're simple, sweet and look nearly good enough to eat ... and now, you can. These stamps will be brought to life for candy lovers everywhere when the New England Confectionery Company (NECCO) manufactures a special run of candy hearts featuring the same sentiment.



“Since 1973, the Love stamp has been a popular addition to cards and letters mailed to friends and loved ones all year long and particularly to celebrate Valentine’s Day,” said David Failor, executive director of Stamp Services for the Postal Service. “In 2004, the candy hearts — those little tokens of affection — will help spread good cheer on millions of letters mailed in virtually every town across America.”

To help celebrate the issuance of the 2004 Love stamp, NECCO, makers of Sweethearts® Conversation Hearts, will manufacture the I ♥ YOU stamp candy hearts to be included in boxes with perennial favorites such as “Be Mine,” “Marry Me” and “Cutie Pie.”

“People have been using Sweethearts to express their affection since the 1800s. We’re very honored the Postal Service is using these candy images on their new Love postage stamp to help people further communicate their sentiments,” said NECCO President Domenic M. Antonellis. “Our hearts have been passed down from generation to generation and the new stamp is a testament to our candy’s place in U.S. history.”

The concept of the Sweethearts Conversation Heart dates back to the 1800s when printed sayings on colored paper were placed in “Cockles,” small crisp candies formed in the shape of a scalloped shell. In 1866, Daniel Chase, brother of Oliver Chase, who founded NECCO in 1847, invented the process whereby the sayings could be printed directly on the candy.

The Sweetheart recipe remains the same since the candy's inception. Once originally cut in various shapes and sizes such as postcards, baseballs or horseshoes, the hearts had room for long messages such as "Please send a lock of your hair by return mail." Today, NECCO produces small and large Sweethearts offering short and sweet sentiments.

To meet demand for its Sweethearts, NECCO produces approximately 8 billion hearts per year at three manufacturing facilities in the United States. The entire production — roughly 100,000 pounds a day — sells out in just six weeks.

For the 2004 Love stamp design, artist Michael Osborne of San Francisco, Calif., illustrated two hearts — one yellow, in the foreground, and one pink, slightly behind it — and added in red the letter "I" and a heart symbol (♥) on the yellow candy and the word "YOU" on the pink candy to spell out "I love you." Osborne also illustrated the two colorful 2002 Love stamps, whose designs featured stylized block letters and a heart-design "V" spelling the word "LOVE."

The first Love stamp was issued by the Postal Service in 1973 with a denomination of 8 cents and an iconic design by pop artist Robert Indiana. Since that time, Love stamps have featured a wide range of subjects, including flowers, animals, cherubs and love letters as well as abstract designs.

To see the 2004 Love stamp, visit the Postal Service Web site and open this press release at www.usps.com/communications/news/stamps/welcome.htm.

Current U.S. stamps and stationery, as well as a free comprehensive catalog, are available by toll-free telephone order at 1 800 STAMP-24. In addition, a selection of stamps and other philatelic items are available at the online Postal Store at www.usps.com/shop.

Since 1775, the U.S. Postal Service has connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. It is an independent federal agency that visits more than 141 million homes and businesses every day and is the only service provider to deliver to every address in the nation. The Postal Service receives no taxpayer dollars for routine operations, but derives its operating revenues solely from the sale of postage, products and services. With annual revenues of more than \$68.9 billion, it is the world's leading provider of mailing and delivery services, offering some of the most affordable postage rates in the world. The U.S. Postal Service delivers more than 46 percent of the world's mail volume — some 202 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year — and serves seven million customers each day at its 40,000 retail locations nationwide.

The New England Confectionery Company (NECCO) was founded in 1847 and is the oldest multi-line candy company in the United States. Popular brands include: NECCO® wafers, Clark® bars, Sweethearts® Conversation Hearts, Mary Jane®, Haviland® Thin Mints and Mighty Malts® Malted Milk Balls. Manufacturing facilities are located in Revere, Mass.; Pewaukee, Wis.; and Thibodaux, La. The company employs approximately 1,200. More than 500 seasonal and year-round products are produced at the facilities.

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