

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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SICKLE CELL DISEASE AWARENESS STAMP
TO BE ISSUED BY U.S. POSTAL SERVICE
Stamp Design Highlights Need For Early Testing

ATLANTA, GA – To raise awareness, encourage early testing, treatment, and focus attention on finding a cure, the U.S. Postal Service will issue the 37-cent Sickle Cell Disease Awareness postage stamp on Sept. 29 in Atlanta at the Sickle Cell Disease Association of America's (SCDAA) 32nd Annual Convention.

The first-day-of-issue dedication ceremony, free and open to the public, will take place at the Renaissance Waverly Hotel, 2450 Galleria Parkway.

Affecting one in 12 African Americans, sickle cell disease damages blood cells by changing smooth and round cells into sickle shapes and making them hard and sticky. This results in the blocking of blood flow and damage to organs. Complications range from intense pain to stroke or death.

Atlanta, as host city to the event, holds the unique distinction of being the only city in the nation where the stamp will be available on Wednesday, Sept. 29. The stamp will be available at Post Offices and Philatelic Centers nationwide on Thursday, Sept. 30.

"The Sickle Cell Disease Awareness stamp brings a greater understanding of the seriousness of sickle cell disease and the thousands of lives it affects, most of whom are African Americans," said Henry Pankey, vice president, Emergency Preparedness, U.S. Postal Service.

"This stamp is part of the Postal Service's 2004 stamp program, a program that celebrates the people, events and history of our nation. It also serves as another way for the U.S. Postal Service to continue its tradition of raising public awareness of health and social issues," he added.

"Science and medicine have advanced rapidly in the past few decades. Unfortunately, this is not the case for sickle cell disease relative to other health disparities. This stamp will help to raise public awareness of the disease and the need for a new focus on the research and care of sickle cell patients," said Dr. Willarda V. Edwards, M.D., President/Chief Operating Officer of the 32-year-old Sickle Cell Disease Association of America. "We are very happy to see this collaborative effort with the SCDAA and the U.S. Postal Service come to fruition," she added.



"This will be a great day in the lives of people who go through life with sickle cell disease. To have this kind of awareness will hopefully encourage people who have not been tested to get the test and to inspire others to become educated about what sickle cell disease is and what it is not," said Tionne "T-Boz" Watkins, Sickle Cell Disease Patient and National Celebrity Spokesperson.

"The stamp will inspire hope in thousands of patients and their families throughout the world that eliminating this disease is important enough to gain the support of the United States Postal Service in helping us continue our mission toward better treatment and eventually a universal cure," she added.

Stamp illustrator and designer James Gurney of Rhinebeck, NY, created a tender image of a mother holding her baby for the Sickle Cell Disease Awareness commemorative stamp. Featuring the inscription "Test Early for Sickle Cell," the design conveys the importance of early testing. Gurney, best known for his highly acclaimed "Dinotopia" books, created fifteen U.S. postage stamps for the 1997 World of Dinosaurs commemorative pane.

It is estimated that more than 80,000 Americans have sickle cell disease and more than two million Americans have the sickle cell trait, meaning they carry one copy of the gene for the disease. There is presently no universal cure for sickle cell disease, though many patients, given proper treatment, can lead fairly normal lives into their 40s and beyond. Researchers continue to look for a cure and for new, more effective treatments.

Sickle cell disease is common throughout the world, and people of all races should be screened to determine if they are carriers of the inherited sickle cell trait or if they have the disease. A simple and painless blood test is all that is needed.

Although "sickle cell disease" and "sickle cell anemia" are sometimes used interchangeably, the general term, "sickle cell disease," refers to a group of inherited disorders that affect the red blood cells. Persons are usually diagnosed with the disease when they are newborns, though the disease can also be diagnosed in a fetus in an early stage of pregnancy.

Sickle cell disease is caused by an inherited form of hemoglobin, a protein that enables red blood cells to carry oxygen from the lungs, via the bloodstream, to all parts of the body. Red blood cells with normal hemoglobin, are smooth and round, and glide easily through blood vessels. In the bodies of people with sickle cell disease, after the carrier cells release oxygen they assume a curved or "sickle" shape and become hard and sticky, blocking blood flow and causing damage to organs. Other complications include episodes of intense pain, swelling, fatigue, jaundice, stroke and anemia.

Treatments for sickle cell disease include antibiotic therapy, supplemental oxygen, transfusions and bone marrow transplantation, a technique more successful in younger people. The drug hydroxyurea has been found to reduce the principal symptoms of sickle cell disease, apparently by activating a gene that triggers the body's production of fetal hemoglobin.

The Postal Service has issued many stamps that increase awareness of important social issues. These have included Breast Cancer Research, Organ and Tissue Donation, Prostate Cancer, Hospice Care, Adoption, Diabetes, AIDS Awareness and Neuter or Spay.

To see the Sickle Cell Disease Awareness stamp and other images from the 2004 Commemorative Stamp Program, visit the Postal Store at www.usps.com/shop and click on "Release Schedule" in the Collector's Corner.

Current U.S. stamps, as well as a free comprehensive catalog, are available by toll-free phone order at 1 800 STAMP-24. A wide selection of stamps and other philatelic items is also available at the Postal Store at www.usps.com/shop. Beautifully framed prints of original stamp art for delivery straight to the home or office are available at www.postalartgallery.com.

Since 1775, the U.S. Postal Service has connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. An independent federal agency, the Postal Service makes deliveries to more than 141 million addresses 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 billion, it is the world's leading provider of mail and delivery services, offering some of the most affordable postage rates in the world. Moreover, today's postage rates will remain stable until at least 2006. 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 38,000 retail locations nationwide.

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TECHNICAL DETAILS

Issue:	<i>Sickle Cell Disease Awareness</i>
Item Number:	456900
Denomination & Type of Issue:	37-cent commemorative
Format:	Pane of 20 (1 design)
Series:	N/A
Issue Date & City:	September 29, 2004, Atlanta, GA 30304
Art Director:	Howard E. Paine, Delaplane, VA
Typographer:	John Boyd, New York, NY
Illustrator:	James Gurney, Rhinebeck, NY
Engraver:	Keating Gravure
Modeler:	Avery Dennison, SPD
Manufacturing Process:	Gravure
Printer:	Avery Dennison (AVR)
Printed at:	AVR, Clinton, SC
Press Type:	Dia Nippon Kiko (DNK)
Stamps per Pane:	20
Print Quantity:	96.4 million stamps
Paper Type:	Nonphosphored, Type III
Adhesive Type:	Pressure-sensitive
Processed at:	AVR, Clinton, SC
Colors:	Yellow, Magenta, Cyan, Black, PMS 7532 (Reddish brown), Cool gray 9
Stamp Orientation:	Vertical
Image Area (w x h):	0.850 x 1.42 in./21.59 x 36.068 mm
Overall Size (w x h):	0.990 x 1.560 in./25.146 x 39.624 mm
Full Pane Size (w x h):	5.85 x 7.25 in./148.59 x 184.15 mm
Plate Size:	200 stamps per revolution
Plate Numbers:	"V" followed by six (6) single digits
Marginal Markings:	"© 2003 USPS" • Price • Plate position diagram Plate numbers (4 per pane) • 4 Barcodes on back
Catalog Item Number(s):	456920 Block of 4 — \$1.48 456930 Block of 10 — \$3.70 456940 Full Pane of 20 — \$7.40 456961 First Day Cover — \$0.75 456993 Full Pane w/First Day Cover — \$8.15

HOW TO ORDER THE FIRST DAY OF ISSUE POSTMARK

Customers have 30 days to obtain the first day of issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at their local Post Office, by telephone at 1-800-STAMP-24, and at the Postal Store Web site at www.usps.com/shop. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes (to themselves or others), and place them in a larger envelope addressed to: SICKLE CELL DISEASE AWARENESS COMMEMORATIVE STAMP, POSTMASTER, 3900 CROWN RD, ATLANTA GA 30321-9998

After applying the first-day-of-issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for the postmark. All orders must be postmarked by October 28, 2004.

Stamp Fulfillment Services also offers first day covers for new stamp issues and postal stationery items postmarked with the official first-day-of-issue cancellation. Each item has an individual catalog number and is offered in the quarterly *USA Philatelic* catalog. Customers may request a free catalog by writing to: INFORMATION FULFILLMENT, DEPT 6270, US POSTAL SERVICE, PO BOX 219014, KANSAS CITY MO 64121-9014, or by calling 1 800 STAMP-24.

First day covers remain on sale for at least one year after the stamp's issuance.