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NAVAJO JEWELRY STAMP SHOWCASES ARTISTRY OF NAVAJO SILVERSMITHS

WASHINGTON – Featuring a striking painted detail of a Navajo silver and turquoise necklace with sand-cast "squash blossoms," the new two-cent Navajo Jewelry definitive stamp was issued today at the Americover Stamp Show in Indianapolis, IN. The stamp is part of the U.S. Postal Service's American Design series.

"The Postal Service is proud to highlight the talents of Navajo silversmiths with the latest edition of our highly regarded American design series," said David Failor, U.S.

Postal Service Executive Director of Stamp Services. "The Navajo learned to work silver from traveling Mexican plateros, or silversmiths, in the mid-19th century and soon turned the craft of jewelry making into a fine art."

The stamp features artist Lou Nolan's painted detail of a Navajo silver and turquoise necklace with sand-cast squash blossoms set with polished blue turquoise nuggets. Nolan based his painting on a photograph by Peter T. Furst. The necklace itself belongs to a private collector and is believed to have been made sometime during the 1940s or 1950s.

Joining Failor at the ceremony was American First Day Cover Society President Tom Foust. "This stamp that depicts the artistry of Navajo silversmiths will be coveted by cachet makers and cachet collectors alike as a special collectable," he said, referring to specially designed envelopes that commemorate a postal or philatelic event.

Definitives stamps are regular issues of postage stamps, usually sold over long periods of time.

With the issuance of the five-cent American Toleware stamp in 2002, the Postal Service launched a new series of definitive stamps featuring examples of the rich



diversity of American design. The American Design series showcases objects from various regions, eras and ethnic cultures that combine utility with beauty, and function with form. It replaces the long-running Transportation series, which was issued from 1981 through 1995. The American Design stamps will range in denomination from one through 10-cents: the 10-cent American Clock and the one-cent Tiffany Lamp were issued in 2003. The four-cent Chippendale Chair was issued in March 2004.

Well before the turn of the 20th century, jewelry making, along with the older tradition of weaving, had become an important aspect of Navajo material culture. Early Navajo silversmiths were especially known for their bracelets, concha belts and necklaces. The squash blossom necklace remains very popular in the Southwest. Artistic expression continues to flourish among Navajo silversmiths today. They use silver, gold and a variety of semi-precious and precious stones to create traditional and contemporary designs.

A squash blossom necklace is typically composed of silver beads resembling stylized blossoms, with a single crescent-shaped pendant at the center. Some squash blossom necklaces are made entirely of silver, particularly older examples. Others combine silver and turquoise or silver and coral. The squash blossom design is based on a Spanish-Mexican trouser ornament that was actually a stylized version of the pomegranate blossom. The Navajo name for this type of necklace – squash blossom – has nothing to do with either squash or pomegranate blossoms. It simply means "round beads that spread out."

The Navajo word for the central crescent-shaped pendant is "názhah," meaning "curve," but such pendants are usually referred to simply as "najas." Initially, the crescent-shaped naja pendants were probably based on Spanish colonial bridle ornaments, which, in turn, were derived from a Moorish crescent design.

Around 1880, Navajo silversmiths began setting stones – particularly large, rough-cut nuggets of turquoise – into silver. Turquoise was, and still is today, highly regarded and appreciated in the Southwest. To many Southwest tribes, turquoise is a sacred stone. The Navajo, who use it lavishly in their jewelry, believe that wearing turquoise brings good fortune.

To see the Navajo Jewelry stamp and other images from the 2004 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 and stationery, as well as a free comprehensive catalog, are available by toll-free telephone order at 1-800-STAMP-24. A wide selection of stamps and other philatelic items also are available at the Postal Store at www.usps.com/shop. And www.postalartgallery.com offers beautifully framed prints of original stamp art for delivery straight to the home or office.

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 about 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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How to Order 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:

NAVAJO JEWELRY DEFINITIVE STAMP
POSTMASTER
125 W SOUTH ST
INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46206-9998

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 September 19, 2004.

How to Order First Day Covers

Stamp Fulfillment Services also offers first day covers for new stamp issues and Postal Service 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 calling 1-800-STAMP-24 or writing to:

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