

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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U.S. POSTAL SERVICE COOKS UP SMILES WITH HOLIDAY COOKIES ON NEW U.S. POSTAGE STAMPS

WASHINGTON — The Postal Service delivered the first taste of the holidays today by dedicating the Holiday Cookies commemorative postage stamps outside the world-famous Pillsbury Kitchens at General Mills Headquarters in Minneapolis. A dedication ceremony also took place in New York City's Madison Square Garden at one of the nation's largest stamp shows, the Postage Stamp Mega-Event.

The four 37-cent stamps — based on photographs of four cookies festively decorated as two snowmen, two elves (one sugar cookie and one made of gingerbread), an angel, and Santa Claus — are guaranteed to remain fresh throughout the holidays and into next year when they become available nationwide at Post Offices and Philatelic Centers beginning Oct. 21.

“What a perfect place to dedicate our Holiday stamps and kick off our Holiday campaign,” said Anita Bizzotto, U.S. Postal Service Chief Marketing Officer and Executive Vice President, who dedicated the stamps in Minneapolis. “The Postal Service is delivering the sweetest holidays ever, and we’ve got the cookies to prove it.”

Joining Bizzotto in dedicating these stamps were Peter Robinson, President, Pillsbury USA Division General Mills; Vonzell Solomon, American Idol finalist and former postal employee; Sally Anderson Bruce, Holiday Cookies Stamp photographer; and The Pillsbury Doughboy.

“With America’s favorite refrigerated sugar cookies and one of the most loved characters, The Pillsbury Doughboy, it’s a natural fit for Pillsbury to join the Postal Service to help make the upcoming holidays the sweetest ever,” said Robinson. “We’re encouraging people nationwide to add a little love to this season, whether they bake a plate of cookies for a neighbor or send greeting cards to friends.”

The Holiday Cookies stamps celebrate the child in all of us, evoking favorite memories from the simple pleasure of decorating cookies. When it is time to celebrate during the holiday season, sweets are always in demand. Cookies and other edible treats were used to decorate Christmas trees long before glass ornaments were used. Today, cookies are still used for that purpose. You may find cookies beautifully gift-wrapped under the tree — on a feast-laden table, as perennial favorites of holiday guests.



“Although we decorated nearly 1,000 cookies to get the stamp designs just right,” said stamp photographer Sally-Andersen Bruce of New Milford, CT, “it’s really fulfilling to know that 200 million are reproduced on stamps.”

Andersen-Bruce recruited a team of experts — including Tommy Simpson, of Washington, CT (who also made the cookie cutters); Emily Diffrient-Crumpton, of Austin, TX; and Rebecca Vermilyea, of Bethlehem, CT — to help bake and decorate the charming cookies shown on these stamps. Derry Noyes of Washington, DC is the art director and designer of the stamps.

For those inspired by the colorful stamps to bake, the U.S. Postal Service is working with Pillsbury to share tips for decorating holiday cookies in its official 2005 Holiday Shipping and Mailing Guide. Every residence in America will receive the guide beginning in early November. Pillsbury is also bringing the stamp images to life on its web site, www.pillsbury.com, with additional decorating ideas and easy holiday cookie recipes that start with convenient refrigerated cookie dough.

Five additional stamps from the Holiday Celebration series are currently available nationwide as well: Kwanzaa, the celebration of family, community and culture; Hanukkah, the Jewish Festival of Lights; EID, the Muslim Holiday; Madonna and Child, the Christmas stamp; as well as last year’s Holiday Ornaments.

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, other philatelic items, and licensed products are 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.

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 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:

HOLIDAY COOKIES STAMPS
POSTMASTER
100 S FIRST ST
MINNEAPOLIS MN 55401-9998

HOLIDAY COOKIES STAMPS
POSTMASTER
421 EIGHTH AVE RM 2029B
NEW YORK NY 10199-9998

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 November 19, 2005.

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 800-STAMP-24 or writing to:

INFORMATION FULFILLMENT
DEPT 6270
US POSTAL SERVICE
PO BOX 219014
KANSAS CITY MO 64121-9014

Philatelic Products

A unique Holiday Planner includes four jumbo post cards featuring the stamp images and cookie recipes (requires 1st class postage). The planner also includes a Gift/to do list booklet, pane of 20 Holiday Cookies stamps, gift tags, cookie recipe card and a kids coloring ornament (featuring one of the stamp images) with ribbon. The product, item # 567687 is priced at \$14.95.

Four other philatelic products available for this stamp issue:

- First-Day Cover (Set of 4) \$3.00 (Item 567563).
- Digital Color Postmark Random Single Cover \$1.50 (Item 567565).
- Digital Color Postmark (Set of 4 Covers) \$6.00 (Item 567568).
- Cancellation Keepsake (Full Pane w/Digital Color Postmark Cover Set of 4) \$13.40 (Item 567599).

These products will be available while supplies last at postal stores, online at www.usps.com, and by telephone at 800-STAMP-24.

Since 1775, the Postal Service has connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. It is an independent federal agency that visits 142 million homes and businesses every day and is the only service provider delivering 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 \$69 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 Postal Service delivers more than 46 percent of the world's mail volume—some 206 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year—and serves seven million customers each day at its 37,000 retail locations nationwide.

General Mills is a leading global manufacturer and marketer of consumer foods products. Its more than 100 U.S. consumer brands includes Pillsbury, Green Giant, Old El Paso, Betty Crocker, Cheerios, Wheaties and other Big G cereal brands, Yoplait, Nature Valley, Totino's, Progresso and more. Visit www.generalmills.com for company information.