

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 14, 2004

Contact: USPS Media Relations 202-268-2155
Sarah Hines/Juliana Lear, NECCO, 617-536-3300
Stamp News Release No. 04-003
www.usps.com

LOVE IS IN THE MAIL:

CANDY HEARTS LOVE STAMP DEBUTS

REVERE, Mass. — A new Love postage stamp from the U.S. Postal Service went on sale today at one of the sweetest places in the country – the New England Confectionery Company (NECCO) in Revere. The new Candy Hearts stamp is adorned by two colorful heart-shaped candies delivering a short but sweet message: I LOVE YOU.

“With the help of candy hearts – those sweet little tokens of affection,” said Alan Kessler, Member of the Presidentially appointed Board of Governors of the U.S. Postal Service, “our stamps will once again help spread a message of love on millions of letters mailed all across America.”

Joining Kessler at the first day of issue ceremony at NECCO’s Revere, Mass., plant was the company’s President and CEO Domenic M. Antonellis, who welcomed guests. Wayne Levy, Make-a-Wish Foundation Board Member and Director of Community Relations for the Boston Celtics, provided remarks and joined Alan Kessler and Michael Osborne, the stamp’s designer, in officially dedicating the new stamp. Two senior postal officials, Marsha Cannon, Postmaster of Boston, and Megan J. Brennan, manager of operations for the Postal Service’s Northeast Area also attended.

To help celebrate the issuance of the 2004 Love stamp, NECCO, makers of Sweethearts® Conversation Hearts, is manufacturing the I LOVE YOU candy hearts, like the ones featured on the stamp, to be included in boxes with perennial favorites such as “Be Mine,” “Marry Me,” “Cutie Pie” and others.

“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 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.

Since 1775, the U.S. Postal Service has connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. An independent federal agency, the Postal Service visits 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 billion, it is the world's leading provider of mail and delivery services, offering some of the most affordable postage rates in the world. Today's postage rates will remain stable until at least 2006. The Postal Service delivers more than 43 percent of the world's mail volume — some 202 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year — and serves 7 million customers each day at its 38,000 retail locations nationwide.