

SWEETS TRADITIONS

Sayings From The Heart: Making Literacy Sweet

(NAPSA)—For more than a hundred years, a popular Valentine’s Day candy has been doing much more than satisfying the world’s sweet tooth. The traditional treats have also been helping children learn to read.

Since 1902, the New England Confectionery Company (NECCO) has been manufacturing Sweethearts® Conversation Hearts. The idea of the sweet treats, a Valentine’s Day tradition, has been passed down from generation to generation. In addition to being an American icon, teachers and parents have been using the candies for decades as a launch pad for literacy, and making learning to read fun for youngsters.

“We hear stories every year about how our candy has been used in classrooms or at home to make learning to read fun,” says Lory Zimbalatti, NECCO’s marketing manager. “And since literacy and education have never been more important, we thought it was time to dedicate this year’s new sayings to the topic of learning.”

This Valentine’s Day there are 10 new sayings that emphasize the importance of education and reading. Among them are “Let’s Read,” “Whiz Kid,” “Wise Up,” “Book Club,” “Teach Me” “Write Me,” “Love Letter,” “Class Act,” “School Mate,” and “Pen Pal.”

The concept for the candy hearts started in the mid-1800s, when printed sayings on colored paper



New sayings for a popular Valentine’s Day treat help promote the importance of literacy and education.

were placed in cockles—small crisp candies formed in the shape of a scalloped shell. In 1866, Daniel Chase, whose brother Oliver founded NECCO, invented a process by which words could be printed directly on the candy. While the Sweethearts® sayings have a new twist each year, the basic recipe and the way they are made remains the same.

The edible hearts have also inspired a series of children’s reading books by author Barbara McGrath. The first book, *I Love Words*, uses the famous candies to help children learn to read and illustrates the fun of letters and words through a variety of rhymes and phrases.

To learn more about Sweethearts® Conversation Hearts, which are also a low-calorie, fat-free way to show someone you care, visit the Web at www.necco.com.