



## Valentine's Day 2021

As soon as the red and green decorations of Christmas leave the stores, out comes the Valentine's Day merchandise. Americans spend a lot of money on love. About 145 million Valentine cards are sent each year – excluding those exchanged by schoolchildren in their classrooms.

Teachers receive the most Valentine's Day cards, followed by children, mothers, and wives.

The first Valentine was sent during the 15 th century. Not until the 1840's did we get mass produced Valentine cards. The tradition of giving flowers dates back to the 17th century.

Pet lovers don't forget their precious pets on Valentines. American households give around 27.6 million gifts for their dog pets and 17.1 million gifts for their cats on Valentine's Day – around \$751.3 million each year.

The top 5 most popular Valentine's gifts are:  
1. Candy – over 40 million boxes a year

2. Cards

3. Dinner & a movie or show

4. Flowers

5. Jewelry

Nearly 6 million couples get engaged on Valentine's Day. It is the 4th most popular date for getting engaged behind Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day. In 2020, jewelry was the gift people spent the most on for Valentine's Day, spending just over \$15.8 billion.

One of the most iconic of all candy for this holiday is the Conversation Hearts. In 1866 these candies appeared with sentimental messages on the hearts. They were much larger than they are today. The messages were longer, for example – How long shall I have to wait? Please be considerate. The candy messages are much shorter today to fit on a much smaller candy. There are approximately 45 messages, such as "True Love", "Hug Me", and "You Rock." The company has to begin production for the next year as soon as the present one has passed.

They have a shelf life of 5 years. I've always heard the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. One of the best expressions of love is cooking something special for the one you love. If they have a sweet tooth, I have some great recipes for Valentine's Day. I hope you will give them a try. Thanks for reading.

### CUPID CRUNCH

1 (24 oz.) pkg. vanilla almond bark  
2 bags lightly salted microwave popcorn, popped  
1 ½ cups Valentine candy corn

## Contract issued for border security helicopters to be built in Mississippi

### Press Release

U.S. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.), a member of the Senate Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, reported on January 26, that the Customs

and Border Protection (CBP) has issued a \$21.2 million contract to begin production of Mississippi-built Light Enforcement Helicopters (LEH).

The CBP contract, which has a \$65.9 million potential value, is for the delivery of up to nine LEHs. The aircraft are manufactured at the Airbus plant in Columbus.

"Light Enforcement Helicopters play an effective role in curtailing illegal activities on our borders. This contract represents our continued work to provide CBP with new aircraft to replace old and less-effective aircraft. I'm pleased aircraft manufacturers in the Golden Triangle Region will continue to contribute to this goal," Hyde-Smith said.

The contract is funded through FY2020 appropriations and represents Hyde-Smith's continued work to secure funding for new aircraft to strengthen the CBP helicopter fleet, which has

### PEANUT BUTTER SNICKER MAGIC BARS

1 ½ cups graham cracker crumbs  
½ cup butter, melted  
1 (10 oz.) pkg. Snickers baking bites  
1 ¼ cups honey roasted peanuts  
1 ¼ cups peanut butter chips  
1 (14 oz.) can sweetened condensed milk

Preheat oven to 350 degrees; lightly spray a 9 x 13 inch baking dish with cooking spray. Combine graham cracker crumbs and melted butter; press into bottom of prepared baking dish. Pour sweetened condensed milk on top; top with Snicker baking bites, peanuts, and peanut butter chips. Bake for 25 – 30 minutes; remove from oven and cool completely before cutting into bars.

### CANDY BAR FUDGE

3 cups sugar  
¾ cup butter  
2/3 cup evaporate milk  
1 (12 oz.) pkg. semi-sweet chocolate chips  
6 (2 oz.) Snicker candy bars, cut into pieces  
1 (7 oz.) jar marshmallow cream  
1 tsp. vanilla

Melt butter, sugar and milk in a heavy saucepan. Mix wee; cook and begin to boil and cook for 3 minutes. Stir and cook another 3 minutes and remove from heat. Add chocolate chips and candy bars; stir and mix until melted. Incorporate marshmallow cream and vanilla; mix well and pour into a buttered 9 x 13 inch baking dish. Refrigerate and cut into squares and serve.

*\*Lee Ann Fleming is a Holmes County native, food columnist and has garnered fame for her recipes featured in the film, **The Help**. Fleming can be reached at [lafkitchen@hughes.net](mailto:lafkitchen@hughes.net).*

been diminished by aging airframes and accidents. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 provides \$28.4 million to continue recapitalization of the LEH fleet.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security deploys

the multi-mission LEHs for border surveillance and law enforcement missions, including the transport and insertion of CBP agents responding to illegal border incursions, search and arrest warrants missions, and high-risk area patrols.

## DURANT NEWS by Rowena Hill

Prayers and best wishes are for Mrs. Billy (Nancy) Irby. She hasn't been well for some time and is to undergo surgery soon. We sure have missed her. Prayers are that all goes well with a complete recovery.

Congratulations to those students who have received special honors for grades at Holmes County Central School District and Central Holmes Academy.

We hardly see or hear from Mrs. R.E. Irby, Jr./Ann Irby. She is very special to a host of Durant friends and a special and lovely lady but not real well now. Thanks to her for being always available at First Baptist Church for so many years. Thank you Ann. We all love you. Come to be with us if you feel like it.

Sympathy is extended to the family of Leroy (Buddy)

Cain, formerly of Durant. He attended Durant school when the family lived on Highway 51 south of Durant. He hasn't been well for several years. His home was in the Boyette community and was married to his wife Georgia Mae for many years. She was a very attentive and loving wife during his recent illness. Graveside services were at Sallis Cemetery before family and friends. Prayers are for the family.

Regular church services at First Baptist Durant are to begin next Sunday, February 7 with Sunday school at 9:45 a.m. and evening services at 5 p.m. Prayer meeting is still at 6 p.m. every Wednesday. It's been many weeks since we have had Sunday evening services. Hope to see you, happy to be back at the Lord's house this Sunday!

## Over \$229 million in PPP loans approved by SBA in Mississippi in current round of funding

### Press Release

As part of ongoing transparency of economic aid programs, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) recently released data summarizing Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan approvals made through Jan. 24, 2021.

The SBA re-opened the PPP Jan. 11 with \$284 billion appropriated through the Economic Aid Act. So far in this round of funding, 2,910 PPP loans valued at \$229,004,064 million have been approved by the SBA in Mississippi.

In the SBA Southeast Region – which serves Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee – a total of over 53,000 PPP loans valued at more than \$4 billion have been approved.

Nationally, more than 400,000 loans valued at more than \$35 billion have been approved this round. Overall, the average loan size is \$87,000. Accumulatively, all PPP loans approved in 2020 combined with this round total more than 5.5 million PPP loans totaling \$557.8 billion.

"We're encouraged to see the very high number of PPP loans that have been approved so far during this latest round of PPP in the Southeast Region. This much-needed financial assistance is intended to provide

economic relief to small businesses and other eligible entities, particularly to businesses located in lower income areas and underserved communities," says Janita R. Stewart, Acting Regional Administrator. "Our intention of this round of PPP is to assist entrepreneurs in areas that may not have had an opportunity to utilize the program during round one of PPP as well as business owners that are prepared to apply for a second draw PPP loan to continue their recovery."

The full Jan. 24, 2021 PPP Report includes national information on lender types, loan sizes, industries, and borrower demographics.

The data released in the report is a snapshot of the PPP loan portfolio as of Jan. 24, 2021. Any loan changes or cancellations made after this date will be not reflected in the report.

Approximately 4,500 lenders nationwide are participating in the PPP this round. PPP loans are made by lending institutions and then guaranteed by the SBA.

To best serve underserved communities – including minority-, women- and veteran-owned small businesses – the SBA has provided dedicated access to community financial institutions (CFIs) that specialize in serving these communities. At least \$15 billion is set aside for PPP lending by CFIs which include Community Devel-

opment Financial Institutions (CDFIs), Minority Depository Institutions (MDIs), Certified Development Companies (CDCs) and Microloan Intermediaries. The CFIs may be located (as well as all PPP lenders) by utilizing Lender Match.

While the PPP loan application expressly requests demographic information of borrowers so that the agency can better understand which small businesses are benefiting from PPP loans, the data reflects the information submitted by lenders to the SBA.

The SBA Mississippi District continues to work in close partnership with the local SBA Resource Partner Network and expand on multilingual access and outreach about the PPP.

Interested borrowers can attend PPP informational webinars presented by SBA Mississippi District staff. The next webinar is Monday, February 1, 2021 at 11:00 a.m. Register here for webinar.

The deadline to apply for a PPP loan is March 31, 2021 or until appropriated funding runs out.

Updated PPP information – including forms, guidance, resources, lender information and data– is at [www.sba.gov/ppp](http://www.sba.gov/ppp). Information about all SBA coronavirus relief funding is available at [www.sba.gov/coronavirus-relief](http://www.sba.gov/coronavirus-relief).

**Bridal Registry**

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