

January 29, 2024
Heidi Darby
Buffalo County Extension
For Immediate Release

February – the Month of Love and Crafting

As we usher in February, I am reminiscing on past Valentine's Day fun over the years with my children. I'm thinking of past boxes, homemade Valentine cards and all the fun of February in elementary school. Our children attended a smaller school and because of that, they were able to celebrate Valentine's Day in their classrooms. The students and teachers would decorate the classrooms with hearts, flowers, and paper chains. It was always something we looked forward to.

The boxes were always a big hit in our home. We had teachers that gave them free reign to make their boxes as big or as small as they wanted. Others limited them to the size of a paper grocery sack. It was always so much fun to see how differently each box or bag was decorated. Our children have created entire farm scenes with barns and windmills. We've had Valentine cows, highly decorated mailboxes, and many more random creations. So many memories of working late into the night to get Valentine boxes done before the deadline. This was usually their first classroom party of the spring semester, and they always had the most fun.

As a country, we do a lot to celebrate this day of love but, where did all this love-centered fun originate? According to the History Channel, "One legend contends that Valentine was a priest who served during the third century in Rome. When Emperor Claudius II decided that single men made better soldiers than those with wives and families, he outlawed marriage for young men. Valentine, realizing the injustice of the decree, defied Claudius and continued to perform marriages for young lovers in secret. When Valentine's actions were discovered, Claudius ordered that he be put to death." This motivated people to gift items to each other in honor of Valentine.

Gifts for the holiday of love have changed from small tokens of affection to ready-made cards. According to Hallmark an estimated 145 million Valentine's Day cards are sent each year. That is not counting all the cards that are exchanged in elementary schools across our nation. Little handwritten notes with gum or candy attached to them. Sometimes there was a fun bag of chips or even a child favorite pen or pencil. Oh, the hours we spent picking out the perfect box of Valentines for each of our children. Our kids always leaned towards animal themed cards while others liked those with cartoon characters on them. I enjoyed watching my children practice their handwriting when addressing the cards to their entire class. Their backward "b's" and all.

What was your favorite Valentine's Day gift? Was it a special piece of jewelry or a delicious dinner date at a great restaurant. Many people will lean towards flowers, jewelry, and chocolate. My favorite gift of all time is a coffee mug with the Coke logo on it. My son gave it to me about 17 years ago. He worked really hard and earned points for finishing books in his reading program. He then traded in his points to get me a Coke coffee mug. It is and will always be one of my favorite gifts.

There are so many fun things that you can do to celebrate this holiday with your kids and grandchildren. Try out a new cookie or chocolate recipe. You can always offer to help them design, plan and decorate a Valentine's box. Grab all the glitter, tissue paper hearts and glue you can find and let their imagination be the guide. As a fun bonus, you can save it and enter it at the County Fair. We have classes where youth can enter their cookies and chocolates. We even have classes for that ever-beautiful Valentine Box. So many fun options to help extend the fun of Valentine's Day for months to come.

Although the weather is not the best, all the love of this season will help warm your heart. If you would like more information on 4-H enrollment or any of the mentioned projects, please contact the Buffalo County Extension Office.

Heidi Darby

4-H Extension Assistant

Nebraska Extension in Buffalo County

1400 East 34th St. Kearney, NE 68847 308-236-1235