

TEEN SCENE

Two Local Teens Debate the Pros and Cons of Valentine's Day

Why Not Every Day?

By Youngjoo Ahn

The romantic nature of Valentine's Day began with Chaucer and Shakespeare even though the disputed existence of St. Valentine occurred years earlier. Valentine's greetings were popular in the Middle Ages but the real market for ready-made cards began in 1913 with the creation of Hallmark.

Today, although Valentine's Day is touted as being a day celebrating love, in my opinion it is really only about mass commercialism. Last year sales on Valentine's Day reached \$17.6 billion. Storefronts to mobile games to children's books encourage consumption with pink and red heart decorations and generic sayings of affection. Sweethearts feel obligated to buy flowers, chocolates, or jewelry to express their love.

The only people who win on Valentine's Day are the owners of companies that benefit from a shopping populace. Instead of cherishing loved ones, Valentine's Day has added a price tag to love. This so-called holiday pressures people to buy gifts for those they care about.

"I think Valentine's Day is a corporate plot to allow companies to make billions of dollars. I'm not against it because love is to be celebrated. It just doesn't need all the chocolate and flowers that people associate with it," senior Ruwan Thilakarathne said. "Show someone you genuinely care about them by writing a letter or spending the day with them."

"I think Valentine's Day is a very commercialized holiday that's only celebrated to make money. It's only really fun for little kids and couples," senior Devin Mottier

said. "There shouldn't have to be a specific day to tell somebody you love them. That's something that should be expressed without a holiday coaxing it out of you."

Because Valentine's Day has become so commercialized, it often ostracizes those who do not receive flowers and gifts. Being single shouldn't make you feel lonely and depressed yet the anti-Valentine's Day, called Single's Awareness Day, or "SAD," has arisen.

"Valentine's Day is a unique holiday where I eat a lot of candy and reevaluate my life as a loner. As a guy, I feel pressured to buy something on Valentine's Day. If a person is in a relationship, it is mandatory to spend on this holiday," sophomore Scott Wu said.

Valentine's Day has lost its meaning because of commercialization. There doesn't need to be a holiday celebrating love, especially when celebrating love consists of the obligation to go on a shopping spree. To me, every day is a time to cherish loved ones, showing them how special they are to me without the added expense of chocolate, flowers, and jewelry.

Youngjoo Ahn is a senior at Miramonte High School.

In her free time she hosts Express Yourself!® Teen Radio, enjoys volunteering, and reads voraciously.



Spreading the Love Around

By Linda Lan Phung

To be or not to be MINE? That is the question that many teenagers think about on Valentine's Day, along with coming up with a romantic gesture for their significant other. This day, like any other holiday, brings joy as well as other benefits.

Valentine's Day spurs creativity because people invent unique ways to show their love. In a way, it forces people to think about their beloved and the memories they have shared together.

Chocolate is a popular gift idea among couples, as freshman Jack Thomas says, "Receiving chocolate makes girls happy, and guys want to make their girlfriends smile." Even though chocolate seems like a simple gift, it contains a multitude of health benefits.

According to recent scientific research, dark chocolate consists of many antioxidants that destroy free radicals, highly reactive atoms that damage DNA and cell membranes that roam around in our bodies. In addition, the cocoa in chocolate reduces cardiovascular disease, protects skin from UV rays, and increases blood flow. Hurrah for chocolate gifts!

Critics may claim that Valentine's Day was merely devised by mercenary corporations to increase sales. However, these profits can be used to produce more cards for upcoming events (e.g. Mother's Day, graduation). Although greeting card companies don't flaunt their charitable actions, most are philanthropic.

Hallmark has partnered with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) since 2006, donating more than \$12 million from sales of UNICEF-related items. They also donated \$3.5 million to the Susan G. Komen Foundation.

Another well-known card enterprise, American Greetings, supports the United Way of

Greater Cleveland through volunteering and fundraising to help local organizations. They have donated boxes of school supplies to the art school, the Rainey Institute.

Although Valentine's Day is an invented holiday, there's a reason why this day is celebrated not only in the U.S. but also in Britain, Japan, Italy, and many other countries. Junior Max Han believes that "love is a universal theme that everyone can relate to." Considering how many books, songs, movies, and TV shows center around the notion of love, it's obvious why this holiday was created.

For the people who call Feb. 14 Singles Awareness Day or "SAD," there are other ways to cope. Travelling, spending time with friends, or watching movies are popular, as senior Olivia Warner adds, "Good movies come out around this time of year." No teen should be ashamed about being an independent and unattached individual. Everyone is single at some time. It is pointless to annually mope.

Feb. 14 is a unifying day for both singles and couples, strengthening friendships as well as romantic bonds. Utilize this day to show your appreciation for loved ones and those who are making a positive difference in your life. Say "thank you" for caring.

Linda Lan Phung, a Miramonte High School senior who volunteers throughout the East Bay, is an officer with Club Be the Star You Are!®, and strives for 17-second miracles, inspired by author Jason Wright.



Teen Scene is YOUR voice. If you have something to say or have writing skills and want to be part of our Teen Scene team, email our Teen Coach, Cynthia Brian, Cynthia@CynthiaBrian.com.

The opinions expressed in Teen Scene are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly.



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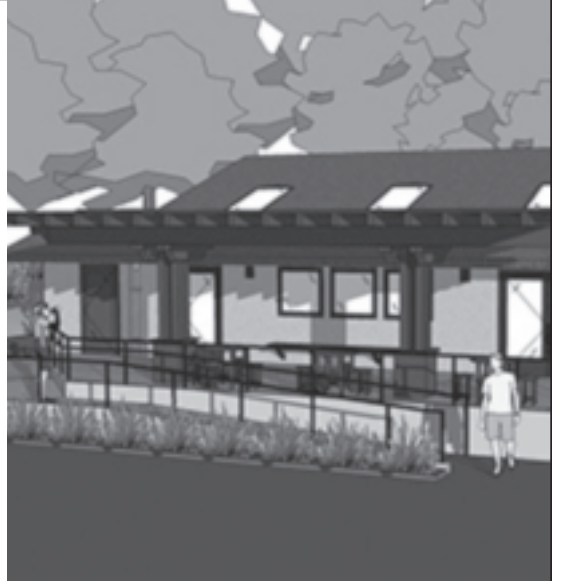
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