



BURR LEWIS staff photographer

Peter Livadas, owner of Peter's Sweet Shop on South Clinton Avenue, displays a 5-pound box of candy. Livadas is extending his store's hours Friday and Saturday to accommodate the expected sales rush for Valentine's Day.

# Valentine's sweetens retail

**MARY CHAO**  
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Valentine's Day is important to Dennis London. That's when the divorced father showers his two children with chocolates.

"Candy is an expression of love," said London, 53, of Penfield, ordering boxes of chocolates at Peter's Sweet Shop at 880 S. Clinton Ave.

Valentine's Day, once deemed just for lovers, has become a gift-giving holiday for friends and family, retailers said.

"It's not just a sweetheart holiday," said Ellen Tolley, spokeswoman for the National Retail Federation in Washington, D.C.

More than half of Americans plan to spend an average of \$99.24 on gifts for significant others, children and parents, for a total of more than \$12 billion in sales, Tolley said.

For florists, candy shops

and jewelers, Valentine's Day is an economic engine. "It's huge," said Charles Arena, president of Arena's Florist at 260 East Ave.

Arena's will have 21 trucks on the roads making 1,200 deliveries Friday and Saturday, including the traditional boxes of a dozen roses, priced at \$72.

Peter's Sweet Shop will be open until 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday to accommodate the late rush, said candy shop owner Peter Livadas.

Among the items: handmade chocolates for \$10.50 a pound, and heart-shaped boxes ranging from \$2.45 to \$110.

For those on low-carb diets, Wegmans Food Markets sells low-carb candy, which has been extremely popular, said spokeswoman Jo Natale.

Most purchases will be last-minute, Natale said,

with items such as roses — \$19.99 a dozen — desserts, greeting cards, steaks and lobsters the big sellers.

Business is also brisk at Cornell's Jewelers, 3100 Monroe Ave. in Pittsford, said vice president Olivia Cornell. Sales have picked up recently on everything from \$75 sterling silver pendants to \$20,000 diamond rings.

Valentine's Day is the biggest holiday for balloon sales at Party City, said John Gaffney, president of the Rochester party store franchise.

Each of his 10 stores in New York and Pennsylvania will sell tens of thousands of heart-shaped balloons, with prices starting at 49 cents.

So far, balloon sales are up 7 percent over last year. Gaffney is hoping he can keep the pace but won't know until it's all over on

## What is the price of love?

Consumers plan to spend over \$12 billion on Valentine's gifts this year.

What the average consumer spends for Valentine's Day



SOURCE: National Retail Federation  
Staff graphic

Sunday. "Valentine's Day takes the cake for last-minute holidays," he said. □

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