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Charmed Blessings

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First, there was the red string kabbalah bracelet popularized by Madonna; then, the yellow "LIVESTRONG" wristband supporting the Lance Armstrong Foundation. Now, there are blessing rings, which may just become the next national craze in message-imbued jewelry. (If they do, you heard it here first, folks.)

The round silver discs, about the diameter of a quarter, come in 32 different styles, each featuring a cutout design and message. There are blessing rings for peace, healing, journeys, wisdom and serenity. Others recognize teachers, mothers, sisters or pets. Along with the "To Life" charm with a Star of David cut-out, there

are "Faith" (with a cross cutout), "Namaste" (with a dove cut-out) and "Angel."

Creators Howard and Whitney Schwartz of the Whitney Collection envisioned the charms being worn on a necklace, slipped on a key ring or kept in a pocket. Customers, however, have come up with many additional uses for the rings, such as decorating invitations, gifts and floral bouquets; hanging them as backpack zipper pulls, and adorning pet collars. Some, such as "Family" and "Thinking of You," have been sent to soldiers serving in Iraq.

"'Peace,' 'Love,' 'Friendship' and 'Healing' are by far the four most popular blessing rings we have," Howard Schwartz said. "I think it's related to what's going on in our society and

around the world."

This month, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., will begin selling two customized tokens designed by the Woodland Hills-based couple. One will feature a candle cutout with the words "Remember" and "Never Again." The second, with a compass cutout, will read, "Equality, Justice and Diversity." The museum will also carry the "To Life" charm.

Schwartz said he was humbled to realize that with the museum's charms, people all over the world would use his product to commemorate those who lost lives in the Holocaust.

"There's no greater honor than to have that recognition," he said.

Examples of Blessing Rings from www.blessingrings.com.

