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Ice-Breaker at Starbucks: The Good Sheet

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Order up a double macchiato with a side of debate. On Thursday, Starbucks will begin offering a free paper from the magazine Good in its stores. Called the Good Sheet, each week it will tackle one election topic, like carbon emissions, health care or education. And Starbucks hopes it will get people talking.



The magazine Good will provide fact sheets on different subjects to the coffee chain.

“We had been looking at ways to bring a little bit of those conversation-starters into the Starbucks environment,” said Terry Davenport, the senior vice president for marketing at Starbucks.

Good, which was founded two years ago, has an editorial emphasis on philanthropy and activism. Some of that is translated into the Good Sheet, a folded piece of newsprint that presents information and statistics in a big graphic. The sheet on health care, for example, gives a history of government health care programs, statistics about health care spending, and suggestions about solutions, including notes on those that John McCain and Barack Obama endorse.

Starbucks has timed the introduction for election season, and will feature a new Good sheet for 11 weeks.

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“We thought, boy, if we could distribute some of those in the stores, it’s a quick way — without sitting down and reading a five-page article — a quick way to join the conversation,” Mr. Davenport said, adding that he envisioned stores holding discussion nights.

Executives from Starbucks, which is based in Seattle, and Good, which is in West Hollywood, said they do not intend the sheets to be partisan. It is not sending a message that “you should vote this way or that way, not in a way that says you should vote Democratic or Republican, but simply in a way that says get involved, be informed,” said Jonathan Greenblatt, the chief executive of Good.

The Good sheet features one advertiser an issue, which covers the cost of the sheet; Starbucks has not paid Good for the sheets.

Starbucks has tried many cultural offerings over the years, from the defunct Joe magazine to CDs to books. The Good sheets may run the risk of prescribing what Starbucks customers ought to be interested in. But John Glass, a restaurant analyst at Morgan Stanley, said this was what Starbucks has always done, ever since it decided \$4 was a reasonable price for a fancy coffee.