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## Longmont celebrates Chinese New Year

By Rita Liu

Shuddering drum beats led a trio of dancing Lions through the capacity crowd at Longmont's Senior Center last Saturday, bringing good fortune to all for the New Year.

Marking the Year of the Golden Rabbit, Mayor Bryan Baum helped Longmont's diverse communities celebrate their first Chinese Lunar New Year festival in a "participatory" manner.

To enhance Longmont's multicultural initiative, the audience was encouraged to participate in some popular Lunar New Year traditions, thereby experiencing the underlying humor and rationale.

The celebration also highlighted some success stories of Colorado's multicultural social environment.

The evening's program started with a story of the "Year of the Rabbit," its meaning and origin. Ed Low, the storyteller, is of Chinese heritage, and is a retired professor who has taught English in Colorado for 41 years.

Storytelling was followed by the Lion Dance and Kung Fu demonstrations performed by members of the Shaolin Hung Mei Kung Fu Association.

The GuFeng Taiji Club staged



Courtesy Rita Liu

Above: In this photo illustration, a portrait of Mayor Bryan Baum and Rita Liu overlays an image of Longmont's celebration of the Chinese Lunar New Year. Left: Children wear festive clothing during the celebration.

four performances of varying styles and movements as well as WuDang Taiji Sword play and the Art of Taiji Gongfu Fan.

The Kung Fu and Taiji demonstrations were performed for the most part by practitioners from various ethnic groups.

Dancers from Bohua Chinese School concluded the Lunar New Year event with a variety of dance performances.

The mayor and audience had the opportunity to participate in giving red envelopes, a popular tradition during the Lunar festivities. Red envelopes are usually filled with cash, in even numbers, and given to the younger generation to ensure their well-being or as rewards for performances.

The organizers of the New Year Celebration had prepared red envelopes stuffed with crisp new two-dollar bills which the audience could obtain to hand out. Many of the envelopes



Courtesy Rita Liu

Bohua Chinese School dancers perform during the New Year celebration.



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landed in the mouths of the dancing lions as rewards for the performance.

In China, food is an integral part of any festival, and there is much humor in food selection.

Dumplings are eaten during the festivities for their taste and shape. The dumplings resemble an ancient silver ingot. The more dumplings a person eats, the more silver he accumulates!

The Chinese word for fish, "yu," sounds exactly like the word for "surplus." The more "fish" you eat, it is reasoned, the more surplus you will enjoy for the year.

"Nian Gao," a glutinous rice cake, is also a favorite because it represents sweet cohesiveness. New Year is a time of re-

unions for family and friends.

During the final hour of the celebration, the audiences were able to try some favorite New Year foods for free. The foods were prepared by Eggloo Delight and Five Spice restaurants of Boulder.

The traditions of the "Spring Festival," another name for the Lunar New Year, are still faithfully followed, not because of the myths, but for the humor and fun.

The Lunar New Year Celebration was co-sponsored by the Asian Pacific Association of Longmont (A-PAL) and the city's multicultural program.

For more information regarding A-PAL, contact Rita Liu at [apalconnect@aol.com](mailto:apalconnect@aol.com).