

Silver Creek students will help host Chinese New Year celebration Saturday

By Magdalena Wegrzyn Longmont Times-Call

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Silver Creek High School's Leadership Academy students work with Asian-Pacific Association of Longmont volunteer Vivian Chien on Monday on origami projects, which will be part of the Chinese New Year celebration at the school on Saturday. (JOSHUA BUCK)



Students from Silver Creek High School's Leadership Academy work with volunteers from the Longmont Culture Task Force and the Asian-Pacific Association of Longmont on Monday to plan for the Chinese New Year celebration at the school Saturday. The students were learning how to use chop sticks so they could teach others at the celebration. (JOSHUA BUCK)



Asian-Pacific Association of Longmont founder Rita Liu, center, and volunteer Lu Zhang, left, teach Silver Creek High School's Leadership Academy students, from left to right, Dalton Haase, Alex Bart, Erik Sargent, Jimmy Fuhrman and Charles Sigwarth, how to use chop sticks Monday. The groups are planning a Chinese New Year celebration at the school Saturday. (JOSHUA BUCK)

LONGMONT -- One? Got it. Two? Not so much.

That was the consensus after Monday's chopstick lessons.

"I'm not doing very good," said Silver Creek High School sophomore Dalton Haase, moments after a wasabi pea escaped from his chopsticks. "I can pick up one. Now I just need to learn how to pick up two."

Sophomores in Silver Creek's Leadership Academy learned origami, paper cutting and chopstick handling on Monday when they met with volunteers from the Asian-Pacific Association of Longmont. On Saturday, students will join A-PAL and the Longmont Multicultural Action Committee in hosting a Chinese New Year celebration.

Chinese New Year, which is called the Spring Festival in China, is a 15-day celebration that marks the end of winter. This year, the Year of the Dragon, started Jan. 23.

Saturday's event at Silver Creek High School will include dance performances, violin and piano

music and demonstrations in kung fu and tai chi. Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Malay food will be available. The event is free and open to the public.

Partnering with the academy provides a way for A-PAL volunteers to interact with the community, said Rita Liu, founder of A-PAL and chairwoman of the Longmont Multicultural Action Committee.

This will be A-PAL's second Chinese New Year celebration in Longmont. More than 300 people attended last year's event at the Longmont Senior Center.

"We celebrate together not just for Asians, but for all Americans," Liu said.

The Leadership Academy is a focus program at Silver Creek that started in fall 2010. Students learn critical thinking, teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills through retreats, internships, capstone projects and creating portfolios.

Sophomores in the program take a semester-long class on global and

cultural leadership that teaches them to be respectful of other cultures.

"We're just giving them little parts of what leaders need in bite-size pieces," said Leadership Academy coordinator Carrie Adams.

Back in the classroom at the paper cutting table, Celia Ho led a group of students in tracing patterns onto folded pieces of red paper, much like cutting an intricate paper snowflake. At the celebrations, people can cut along the lines to make 3-D Chinese characters that mean "good luck" or "spring."

Sophomore Maddie Toretto, 15, chatted with Ho about tens of thousands of Chinese characters and said she was amazed at how many there are.

"It's really cool to have an opportunity to interact with the community instead of doing bookwork, which is boring," said Toretto.

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