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Rockville to hold its first Lunar New Year program

by Contessa Crisostomo | Staff Writer
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For some members of Rockville's Asian community, the Year of the Ox is fitting as the first year the city will hold a Lunar New Year celebration.

"Ox is typically hard working and strong will," said John P. Lin, member of the city's Asian Pacific American Task Force. "This is the spirit that we need for this economy."

The celebration, sponsored by the Rockville City Council and the Asian Pacific American Task Force, will be held at noon on Saturday at the Metropolitan Center for the Visual Arts (VisArts) in Rockville Town Square.

The free event will feature music and dance by Asian-American youth groups, such as a yo-yo performance by the Kuang Chi Chinese School, karate demonstration by Kicks Karate, breakdancing by Rocket Crew, and other traditional performances.

The family-friendly activities will also include Chinese character writing, paper-folding and clay sculpting.

Refreshments will be provided by Seven Seas, Tara Asia, Thai Pavilion and Mama Wok and Teriyaki.



Charles E. Shoemaker/The Gazette
 Tai Chi Master Owen Liao (center), from Eastern Healing Center in Gaithersburg, demonstrates tai chi moves at the Rockville Library on Saturday.

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Lin said the event is the culmination of more than eight months of planning by the task force, which was created by the City Council last year to foster relationships between the city and its Asian and Pacific American residents.

"The goals of this event is to bring different Asian communities together to celebrate ... the new year and to share the Asian culture with the general public," Lin said.

The celebration aims to educate the public about the diverse Asian cultures, former task member Paula Lin said.

Paula Lin added that it is especially timely given that newly inaugurated President Barack Obama was also born in the Year of the Ox.

"Interestingly enough, a number of ox qualities can already be discerned in President Obama. People born under the sign of the ox usually have strong codes and work ethics," she said.

Other famous people born under the influence of the ox include Jane Fonda, Jack Nicholson, Margaret Thatcher, Meryl Streep, Princess Diana and George Clooney.

Task force member Eric Wang said it is especially significant to hold a Lunar New Year celebration in Rockville because the Asian community is the city's largest minority group.

According to the 2005 census, Asians and Pacific Islanders make up more than 10,000 of Rockville's residents, which is about 20 percent of the city's population.

"It's a very good beginning for the city of Rockville," Wang said.

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