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# Summit Library Helps Usher In the 'Year of the Rat'

By TAPINTO SUMMIT STAFF  
January 26, 2020 at 3:41 PM



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SUMMIT, NJ - More than 200 local residents helped the Summit Free Public Library celebrate Lunar New Year's and welcome the 'Year of the Rat' at the Library's 8th annual Lunar New Year celebration. The festive event featured treats, activities, and entertainment representing Chinese, Korean, Malaysian, and Vietnamese cultures..

Along with performances, heritage showcases, and more, attendees enjoyed a wide variety of Asian snacks and homemade gourmet food, including Vietnamese style fried rice, spring rolls, dumplings, and different flavored rice cakes from China, Malaysia, and Korea.

A man portraying the 'God of Wealth' mingled throughout the crowd, distributing 'red envelopes' to the children. A big screen with a commemorative scene was set up for family portraits. Demonstrations and hands-on workshops were also held, including a traditional tea art demonstration, a calligraphy tutorial, an opportunity to have one's name written in Korean, and a Chinese knots and crafts workshop.

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Children could even practice their 'chopstick skills' by lifting LEGOs.

The Chinese Culture Club -- a group that meets twice a month on Tuesday evenings at the Library -- held a fundraiser with traditional toys, decorations, tea and homemade food. All funds raised benefit the Library's multicultural programming and a collection of children's books in Chinese. And, since no Lunar New Year celebration is complete without a dragon parade, children held two dragons and walked around the Library.

A variety of performances were held in the rotunda. The traditional Chinese performances started with Jeslyn Wheeless, wearing a silk robe her son brought back from China, reading a book based on a Chinese legend, *The Runaway Wok*, to the children. Following the reading, music from the China Youth Orchestra played a well-known folk song, *Iris in Bloom*, on Chinese instruments including the *Erhu*, the *Guzheng*, and the *Zhongruan* with cello accompaniment. Three dancers performed two folk dances, *Blue & White Porcelain* and a unique 'Kung Fu Dance' -- a combination of Chinese folk dance and Kung Fu. The performances concluded with an excerpt from Peking Opera, performed by Yunji Zhang, a 4th grader from the Kent Place School, who has been practicing Peking Opera for five years. She presented an expressive ribbon dance: *The Goddess of Heaven Scatters Flowers*.

Mayor Nora Radest was on hand and, along with the director of the Summit Free Public Library Susan Permahos, presented awards to the eight winners of this year's 'Rice Cake Contest'.

The event was organized by the Library with the help of several organizations, including HSBC Bank, Meidong Asian Food Market, Ben Zhang Realty, ATA CAP Group, Grace Liu, CPA, and nearly 50 volunteers from Summit and other towns. The Lunar New Year Celebration, as well as the Chinese Culture Club, are key parts of the Library's multicultural programming aimed at introducing different cultures and promoting diversity in Summit.