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Gung Hay Fat Choy!

Chinese Lunar New Year Festival at TCCC Set for Saturday, Feb. 9, to celebrate Year of the Rat

TUCSON – A huge evening of fun to celebrate the Chinese New Year is scheduled from 6 to 10 p.m., Saturday, February 9, at the Tucson Chinese Cultural Center (TCCC). Dinner, auctions, entertainment and games of chance are part of the festivities planned – all to help support a variety of programs at the non-profit TCCC.

The Chinese year 4706 begins Feb. 7, and is the most important holiday for Chinese families, offering a time for reunion and thanksgiving, explained Jason Wong, Chairman of the fund raiser. There will be many opportunities to experience Chinese New Year customs that evening, in addition to a full evening of entertainment, foods, games of chance and silent and live auctions for \$125/person.

This is the year of the rat, the first animal among the 12 zodiac animals in the Chinese horoscope. According to legend, China's Jade Emperor called all the animals in the world to help him celebrate his departure from the earth. He challenged them to a race, saying the first 12 animals to cross the finish line would be immortalized in the order they finished. Through a bit of well-timed diversion, the rat distracted the tiger and stole a ride on the ox's back, jumping off the beast's nose to cross the finish line first.

At the finish line, the lunar sequence was forever sealed in this order: rat, ox, tiger, hare, dragon, snake, horse, ram, monkey, rooster, dog, and boar. The 12 animal signs of today have each ruling a birth year over which is exercised a profound influence and is considered to be "the animal that hides in your heart."

The Chinese lunar calendar remains the longest chronological record in history, dating from 2637 B.C. when the first cycle of the zodiac was introduced. One complete cycle takes 60 years

and is made up of five simple cycles of 12 years each. The 78th cycle started on February 1984, and will end on February 2044.

People born in the Year of the Rat (1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008) have the purest of hearts, according to the Chinese horoscope. The Year of the Rat represents the beginning of a new era. According to Chinese lore, because it is the first year of a new cycle, it will also be wise to make long-term investments in preparation for the years of hardship that may follow.

Rat people are honest, ambitious and have a tremendous capacity for pursuing a course to its end. Famous people born in the Year of the Rat include Wolfgang Mozart, William Shakespeare, President George Washington, Cameron Diaz, Winston Churchill, Hugh Grant and Ben Affleck.

Major sponsors for this year's event include: Choi and Kitty Lee, Freeport McMoran, Desert Diamond Casino & Hotel, Red Point Development, Merit Builders and The Architecture Company.

The Tucson Chinese Cultural Center (TCCC) opened in August 2005. The TCCC is a part of the Tucson Chinese Association (TCA), a nonprofit (501C3) corporation that promotes, sponsors, and educates the community relating to the Chinese culture and heritage via activities and the Tucson Chinese School throughout the year.

The TCCC has a garden for outdoor venues, and basketball and volleyball courts; and inside classrooms for art and language courses for the Chinese School, a large room seating up to 280, and a full-size Chinese kitchen with three built-in woks which support dining events as well as cooking classes

The TCCC, a 16,000-square-foot structure, is located at 1288 W. River Rd. with a main phone number of 292-6900. The center's hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday through Saturday and from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Sundays.

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