

新年快乐 / 新年快樂 (Happy New Year!)

Chinese culture celebrates Year of the Goat beginning Thursday

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-ObsERVER

MONMOUTH — Make sure the house is cleaned, laundry is caught up and hair has been washed before Thursday, which marks the Chinese New Year.

Sweeping, cleaning clothes or washing hair on the first few days of the Chinese New Year may bring you and your family bad luck for 2015, the Year of the Goat.

"Bad luck is generally reserved for people born in that year," said Anne Rohlf, international student adviser at Western Oregon University. "If you are someone who was born in the year of the goat, wear red. It will lessen the bad luck year."

In fact, red is a lucky color in Chinese culture and should be worn on Chinese New Year's even for those not born in the year of the goat.

The Chinese calendar is based on the lunar year. It is based on exact astronomical observations of the sun's longitude and the moon's phases. Under the lunar calendar, the new moon marks the first day of the month.

But the Chinese calendar takes more into account besides the moon, said Longlong Liu, an international student at WOU.

Liu, from Qingdao, China, said it's about the weather, too.

"We just know when it's the Chinese New Year," he said. "It depends on the season, working with the farm season."

The Chinese New Year is the biggest national holiday in China, celebrated for a full week. Families gather from near and far to eat, visit and, of course, watch the CCTV Festival Show, which starts at about dinner time and finishes with fireworks at midnight on Chinese New Year.

"The family kind of shares what we did in the last year and what we will do in the next year," Liu said. "Life is pretty fast in China. We don't have much time to meet together, so the New Year is a good (time to reconnect)."

As a child, Liu said his fa-



vorite part of the celebrations was lighting the fireworks. Now, he appreciates the time to catch up with his grandmother, aunts, uncles and cousins.

As a student at WOU, it makes it difficult to go home to China for the holiday, but his parents live in Monmouth with him, so that makes gathering with some family easier.

Chinese families always have a large feast on the New Year. It's more about what you eat rather than how much you eat. Some foods are considered lucky, and will bring good fortune throughout the year.

"Dumplings and fish," Liu said of his family meals for New Year's. "In my childhood, they put money inside the dumplings."

The words for "fish" and "surplus" in Chinese sound similar, so eating fish is said to bring wealth. Dumplings are shaped like an old currency of money.

Young children will receive gifts of money in red envelopes, though Liu, 25, said it has been many years since he has been the recipient of cash for New Year's.

"Chinese people like the dragon year," he said. "Other years are more normal years."

There are 12 animals which make up the Chinese zodiac: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, chicken, dog and pig.

Cultural Celebration

What: Western Oregon University's Chinese New Year celebration.

When: Thursday, 5:30 p.m.

Where: Pacific Room, Werner University Center, WOU campus, 345 N. Monmouth Ave., Monmouth.

Admission: \$5 for WOU students with ID; \$7 general admission; \$3 for senior citizens and children younger than 5. Tickets are available at Werner University Center and at Sing Fay in Monmouth.

Of note: Dinner served by WOU Catering and Sing Fay restaurant will begin at 5:30 p.m. The variety show, packed with performances from students and professors ranging from singing, comedy and martial arts presentations, will begin at 6.

For more information: Anne Rohlf, 503-838-8161; email to rohlf@wou.edu.



AARON YOST/for the Itemizer-ObsERVER

Bows nurses her 3-day old triplets. Three goats are lucky for the Year of the Goat.



SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/for Itemizer-ObsERVER

Envelopes containing "lucky money" are among the traditional gifts that are part of the annual Chinese New Year celebration. Chinese New Year begins Thursday.

Learn More

What: Presentation by Western Oregon University international Chinese students about Chinese New Year: The Year of the Goat.

When: Friday, 1 p.m.

Where: Monmouth Senior Center, 180 S. Warren St.

For more information: Anne Rohlf, WOU international student adviser, 503-838-8161; Monmouth Senior Center, 503-838-5678.

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