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CULTURE

Year of the Dog dances in

Chinese Lunar New Year is welcomed



MAME BURNS THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

The audience appears to enjoy a traditional Chinese lion dance by performers from Lane's Tiger and Crane Academy in Bellingham. The performance started the Chinese New Year of the Dog party organized by the Northwest Chinese Cultural Association. The festivities took place Sunday at Fox Hall next to the Hampton Inn. There was also a silent auction, food and singers.

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MICHELLE THERIAULT
THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

Judging by the festive mood at Bellingham's Fox Hall on Sunday, the Year of the Dog looks to be off to an auspicious start.

Bellingham's Northwest Chinese Cultural Association welcomed in the Chinese New Year on Sunday with an event held at Bellingham's Fox Hall.

"I expect this year to be very prosperous," said Patrick Uly, a longtime member of the association.

Families and friends passed envelopes of "lucky money," feasted on steamed dumplings, tea and jade-green vegetable dishes and listened to a traditional song to ring in the Chinese Lunar New Year at the afternoon event, which organizers said is usually attended by 250 to 300 people.

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CHINESE CULTURE FESTIVAL

• The Chinese Culture Festival features the Peking Opera Troupe from Seattle, Silk and Bamboo Ensemble from Vancouver, B.C., Mount Baker Youth Symphony performing Chinese Violin Concerto, and a performance by the Western Washington University symphony.

The event is a chance for those in the Chinese community to celebrate and connect during the most important festival of the year.

• Event is at 7 p.m. Friday, Feb. 10 at the Mount Baker Theatre.

• Tickets are \$10 adults, \$5 youths.

• More information is online at www.mountbakertheatre.com.

"We're not able to celebrate with family back in Asia," said Sabrina Walton, the incoming president of the organization.

"You create a circle of friends here that become family."

Debbie Ruther, the outgoing vice president, says the celebration is like a family reunion for the tight-knit community.

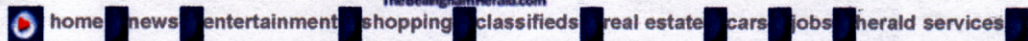
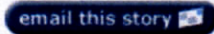
The event drew a broad group of people hailing from all over Asia, including Malaysia, Taiwan and Thailand, as well as many families with children adopted from China, people interested in exploring their heritage and those simply interested in Asian culture.

That's why the room is so crowded, joked Patrick Uly - more people come every year.

The event is put on by a devoted group of more than 25 volunteers, Walton said.

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