

10 LICM celebrates Lunar New Year with culturally informed shows and activities

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To celebrate and inform children about the Lunar New Year the Long Island Children’s Museum brought together various Chinese cultural organizations on Jan. 28 and 29.

Many dances were performed each day, while several crafts were available for viewing or participating in. LICM even showed off a couple zodiac animals in their habitats.

The Asian population on Long Island is growing and Children Museum officials noted that 25 percent of its visitors are Asian.

“Lunar New Year is a major holiday in many Asian countries,” said Jeremy Wang, master of ceremonies. “China, Korea, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Singapore. It’s actually a major holiday. Although, it doesn’t have any religious association — it’s simply a cultural and traditional holiday.”

Several dance groups from the Chinese Center on Long Island performed various traditional dances: Lion Dance, Xinjiang, Feitian, which means Flying in the Sky, and more, as well as vocal performances.

“It’s awesome,” said Chris Bartoldus, Lion Master. “They have such a passion for coming to the center, learning the language, and connecting with all their roots. We teach Lion Dance to kids ages five to 18, so all through their schooling. Some of them love it so much that they come back after college.”

Bartoldus has loved Lion Dancing since he was a kid.

“It teaches you a little bit of discipline, how to perform in front of a crowd. Five or six years ago I was asked to teach it, and never looked back.”

Lily Blecha, who served as an assistant Lion master volunteer, thinks that sharing Chinese culture during this time is important.

“It feels great to spread the culture, because during Covid we were marginalized...we were blamed for spreading the virus,” Blecha said. “So spreading this experience is just fulfilling.”

One of the other attractions was calligraphy — where a master wrote on a lucky red piece of paper for each child.

“We write fu,” said David Zhou, pres-

ident of the Fujian Artist Association which provided the artist-made crafts. “In Chinese it has five meanings. Chinese culture has been going for 5,000 years. We send the message of good luck for everybody who comes here.”

Fujian also showed off Lina Liu, who has been sugar painting for nearly 40 years. She learned as an apprentice in China. Sugar painting is when a person takes melted sugar and draws a graphic with it and attaches it to a stick, to be admired and eaten by someone.

“It brings Chinese culture, like a flower or butterfly, to make them happy,” Liu said.

Most of the parents and children were most excited by the Lion Dance. For Roger Hsi, it was about sharing his own culture with his children.

“The first time for them to watch it, and being of Chinese heritage, it was nice for them to have that exposure,” he said.

Yet, some of the parents and children came to the museum with no knowledge that the Lunar New Year celebration was happening.

“We walked into the museum and we were surprised by a huge (lion) show. And we loved it. It was so colorful and the music was amazing, right?” Judith Gutman asked her daughter, Sophia.

“I like when they go up and down,” Sophia said as she looked at her twin Mia.

For some parents, the LICM is a refuge in the winter months.

“Unfortunately the weather is not allowing us to get outside, and we have to do something indoors,” said Rina Beach, who was accompanied by her grandchildren. “We come here all the time.”

Beach’s grandchildren loved making lanterns and necklaces.

“My granddaughter keeps telling us how beautiful everything she makes is,” Beach said as she laughed.

The entire celebration took about six months to plan.

“I think it just keeps growing with joy and happiness,” said Aimee Terzulli, vice president of the museum. “We want everybody to know that this is a town square, where we want all cultures and people to join together to learn about each other, and celebrate their traditions.”



Courtesy Long Island Children’s Museum

Kids love it when the lions go above the dancers’ heads. It’s said to be lucky to touch the lions as they dance.



Courtesy Long Island Children’s Museum

Chinese Center on Long Island’s Lion Troupe at LICM



Rei Wolfsohn/Herald

Mr. Wu and Mr. Zhang create calligraphic art for LICM’s children