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Contact: Rita Peer (202) 268-2126
Marc Dixon (808) 423-3713
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POSTMASTER GENERAL TO UNVEIL LUNAR NEW YEAR STAMPS SOUVENIR SHEET IN HAWAII

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Postmaster General John E. Potter will unveil the beautiful Lunar New Year Stamps Souvenir Sheet – an early first glimpse of what is expected to be a favorite of the 2005 Postal Service Commemorative Stamp Program – on Dec. 29, 2003 at 5 p.m. at the East-West Center, 1601 East-West Road, Honolulu, Hawaii.

“The Souvenir Sheet is a spectacular grand finale to the Postal Service’s award-winning Lunar New Year stamp series designed by artist Clarence Lee,” said Potter. “We have been honored to celebrate each year of the Chinese Zodiac with stunning stamps that reflect the rich, multi-cultural heritage of a substantial portion of our country’s population.”

Each stamp on the Souvenir Sheet is valued at the current 37-cent First-Class one ounce postage rate and includes one stamp for each of the twelve Lunar New Year stamps, from the Year of the Rooster (issued in 1992) through the Year of the Monkey (to be issued Jan. 13, 2004).

To commemorate the Chinese Zodiac, stamp designer Clarence Lee has created an intricate paper-cut design honoring each animal mentioned in an ancient Chinese fable that says the emperor asked all animals to report to him on the day of the Chinese New Year, and the first twelve to reach the palace would be rewarded with a year named after them. Since then, twelve animals with their own distinctive characteristics and fate have represented each year in the Chinese Zodiac.

The stamp designs also include grass-style calligraphy by Lau Bun that translates into English as “Year of the (animal),” and the greeting “Happy New Year!” in English.

The Lunar New Year is a family affair that holds great importance to those of Asian descent around the world. It is a time to cast away the bad blood of the previous year and to wish for good fortune in the coming year. And the Chinese Zodiac is extremely practical – a child doesn’t have to



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learn a new answer to the question, "How old are you?" They just remember which animal's year was celebrated when they were born.

Lee, an American of Chinese descent, was born in Honolulu. After attending Pomona College in Claremont, Calif., Lee transferred to the School of Art and Architecture at Yale, receiving a bachelor of fine arts degree in 1958. He worked as a designer in New York before returning to Hawaii in 1966 to open his own design firm.

An image of the Lunar New Year Souvenir Sheet is not currently available. However, on Dec. 30, 2003, the image will be posted for viewing on the Postal Store at www.usps.com/shop. Simply click on "Release Schedule" in the Collector's Corner.

Current U.S. stamps, as well as a free comprehensive catalog, are available by toll-free phone order at 1 800 STAMP-24. A selection of stamps and other philatelic items are also available at the online Postal Store at www.usps.com/shop. In addition, beautifully custom-framed prints of original stamp art are available at www.postalartgallery.com.

Since 1775, the U.S. Postal Service has connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. An independent federal agency, the Postal Service visits 140 million homes and businesses every day and is the only service provider to deliver to every address in the nation. The Postal Service receives no taxpayer dollars for routine operations, but derives its operating revenues solely from the sale of postage, products and services. With annual revenues of more than \$68 billion, it is the world's leading provider of mail and delivery services, offering some of the most affordable postage rates in the world. The Postal Service delivers more than 43 percent of the world's mail volume — some 203 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year — and serves 7 million customers each day at its 38,000 retail locations nationwide.

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