

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 15, 2003

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Stamp News Release #03-005
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LUNAR NEW YEAR SERIES FEATURED YEAR OF THE RAM

CHICAGO, Ill. – People around the world will celebrate the Lunar New Year beginning Feb. 1, 2003. According to the Chinese lunar calendar, the Year of the Ram begins on that date and ends on Jan. 21, 2004. The new 37-cent stamp was issued by the U.S. Postal Service.

The first day of issue ceremony took place today at 11 a.m., at the John C. Haines Elementary School, in Chicago. The 2003 Year of the Ram stamp is available at Chicago post offices today and at post offices nationwide starting tomorrow.



The series began in 1993 with the issuance of the Year of the Rooster stamp, followed by stamps for Year of the Dog, Boar, Rat, Ox, Tiger, Hare, Dragon, Snake and Horse.

"The Postal Service highlights the cultures of people who came together from every corner of the world, reflecting the rich and complex heritage of America," said William T. Johnstone, Secretary to the Board of Governors of the U.S. Postal Service, who dedicated the stamp.

He added, "We are proud of our contributions to the country and will continue to do everything we can to bind this great and diverse nation together. And, as part of that mission, we will continue to recognize the events and the cultures that make America unique in the history of the world."

"We are very excited to have the first day of issue "Year of the Ram" stamp ceremony in Chicago's Chinatown this year," said Helen Lee, President, Chicago Chinatown Chamber of Commerce. "Not only is it great for Chicago, but it is a wonderful way to highlight our thriving community to the rest of the country. The Chicago Chinatown Chamber of Commerce is pleased to be a part of this historical event, and we are proud of the U.S. Postal Service for taking such an active role in promoting our culture."

Joining Johnstone were Gene Lee, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor, City of Chicago; Helen Lee, President Chicago Chinatown Chamber of Commerce; Christine Chen, Executive Director, Organization of Chinese Americans; Nancy Loo, Anchor, Fox News, Chicago; and Eric D. Chavez, Chicago's Postmaster.

Charm, creativity and a caring and gentle personality are hallmarks of the ram, the eighth of twelve animals associated with the Chinese lunar calendar. People born in the Year of the Ram are said to be fond of nature and they are often happiest in a tranquil and secure environment. Observed by people of Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Tibetan and Mongolian heritage, the traditional Chinese New Year marks the beginning of a new season. Also called Spring Festival, it is a time of renewed hope for a prosperous future and is often celebrated by reunions with family and friends.

To commemorate the Year of the Ram, artist Clarence Lee created an intricate paper-cut design of a ram. The Chinese characters—drawn in grass-style calligraphy by Lau Bun—translate into English as “Year of the Ram.” The greeting “Happy New Year!” is in English.

Clarence Lee, an American of Chinese descent, was born in Honolulu, Hawaii. 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.

To see the Year of the Ram stamp, visit the Postal Service Web site at www.usps.com and locate the online version of this press release by clicking on “News and Events,” then “Philatelic News.”

Current U.S. stamps, as well as a free comprehensive catalog, are available toll free by calling 1 800 STAMP-24. In addition, a selection of stamps and other philatelic items are available in the Postal Store at www.usps.com/shop.

Since 1775, the U.S. Postal Service has connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. It is an independent federal agency that visits 137 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 \$65 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 46 percent of the world's mail volume—some 207 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year—and serves 7 million customers each day at its 40,000 retail locations nationwide.

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