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Media Contacts: Rita Peer 202-268-2126
Duke Gonzales 808-423-3713
Postal Service Website: usps.com
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TRIUMPHANT FINALE OF AWARD-WINNING USPS STAMP SERIES

WASHINGTON – The strikingly beautiful Lunar New Year Stamps souvenir sheet was dedicated today by the U.S. Postal Service at the Hilton Hawaiian Village in Honolulu, HI. The event celebrated, commemorated and brought to a triumphant finale the award-winning and popular Lunar New Year stamp series designed by world-renowned artist Clarence Lee.

The double-sided souvenir sheet contains two of each of the Lunar New Year stamps issued over the last 12 years. Each is valued at the current 37-cent First-Class letter rate.

“I’m delighted to help celebrate the vibrant tradition of the lunar new year, and the creative genius of Clarence Lee, with the dedication of the beautiful Lunar New Year stamp series,” said Azeezaly S. Jaffer, vice president, Public Affairs and Communications, U.S. Postal Service, who dedicated the souvenir sheet. “His work captures perfectly the sense of wonder and renewal that families and individuals around the world experience as they gather to enjoy this venerable Asian custom.”

Joining Jaffer for the dedication ceremony was Lee. “During the creation of the Lunar New Year stamps, and with this beautiful souvenir sheet, my enthusiasm and pride in this hallmark collection knows no bounds,” said Lee. “The stamps and souvenir sheet bring honor to the Asian community, and I am grateful for my part in their design.”

To commemorate the Chinese Zodiac, Lee created an intricate paper-cut design honoring each animal mentioned in an ancient Chinese fable. The fable says the emperor asked all animals to report to him on the day of the Chinese New Year, and the first 12 to reach the palace would be rewarded with a year named after them. As a result, 12 animals with their own distinctive characteristics and fate represent 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.

Lee, an American of Chinese descent, was born in Honolulu. After attending Pomona College in Claremont, CA, he 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.

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

To see the Lunar New Year souvenir sheet and other stamp designs, go to the Postal Service’s online store at www.usps.com/shop, and click on "Release Schedule" in the Collector's Corner. Media may obtain reproducible images of the Lunar New Year souvenir sheet and other stamp designs—at no cost and in a variety of formats—by registering at <http://usps.brandguard.com>.

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.

With the dedication of the Lunar New Year souvenir sheet, the Postal Service introduces First-Day Digital color postmarks. The First-Day Digital color postmark for the Lunar New Year souvenir sheet, also designed by Lee, is the first postmark specifically designed to enhance the visual appeal of the stamp and cover. Cost for the First-Day Digital color postmark is \$1.50 per cover. Note: Digital color postmarks are not available on customer-submitted covers.

Since 1775, the U.S. Postal Service has connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. An independent federal agency, the Postal Service makes deliveries to more than 142 million addresses 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 \$69 billion, it is the world's leading provider of mail and delivery services, offering some of the most affordable postage rates in the world. Moreover, today's postage rates will remain stable until at least 2006. The U.S. Postal Service delivers more than 46 percent of the world's mail volume—some 206 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year—and serves seven million customers each day at its 37,000 retail locations nationwide.

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