

TIMES-CALL

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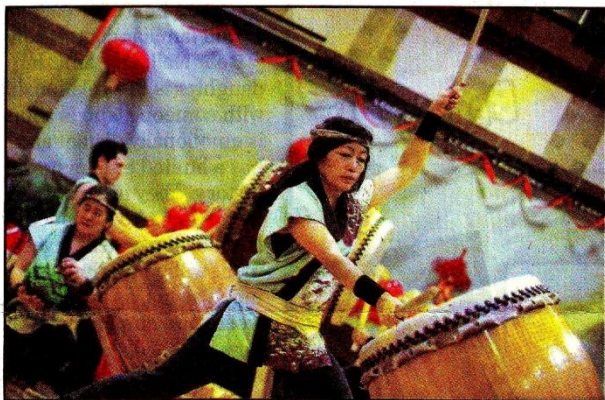
Left: Lion Dance is performed by the Shaolin Hung Mei King Fu Association.

Steve Rippel / Courtesy photo

Below left: Japanese drumming is performed by Denver Taiko.

Jack Greene / Courtesy photo

Longmont celebrates Chinese New Year



BY LEE WAN-RU

ASIAN-PACIFIC ASSOCIATION OF LONGMONT

Longmont celebrated the Year of the Horse (Chinese Lunar New Year) on Feb. 8 at Silver Creek High School in an atmosphere of growing interest in cultural diversity.

This is the fourth lunar year celebration sponsored by the Asian-Pacific Association of Longmont (A-PAL), a nonprofit dedicated to multiculturalism. More than 1,300 people attended the festivities.

The event was hosted by the Silver Creek High School, and its Silver Creek Leadership Academy appointed two

seniors, Alex Bush and Nico Rembert, to the project. Some 50 student volunteers were also assigned to help with the celebration.

The festivities provided participants with hands-on exposure to Asian culture. To convey the sights and sounds of Asia, the performances included: the Lion dance and Kung Fu by the Shaolin Hung Mei Kung Fu Association, violin music by the Flatiron Strings Academy, dances by Bohua Chinese School, Chinese "Yu" Opera presented by the Confucius Institute of Denver, Hip Hop dance, and a dis-

Please see CHINESE NEW YEAR, 68

CHINESE NEW YEAR from page 5B

play of Chinese Yo-Yo skills with high-speed "diabolo."

Denver Taiko concluded the show with a Japanese style of dynamic drumming that is loud, hard and fast, requiring strength and endurance. It was, according to one viewer, an "incredible performance" bringing the event to "an unforgettable ending."

Following the show, the audience was guided through the school corridors where 12 activity booths offered participatory experiences in Asian arts and crafts. Participants tried their knack in origami, paper cutting, calligraphy, brush painting, chopstick lessons, name transliteration and trade red envelopes. There were also opportunities to touch and feel Pan Asian artifacts as well as view "100 Years of Asian History in Paper Money."

"Abacus," known as the "Suan Pan," is a useful calculator developed in China 1,800 years ago. Shen Tzung-Sz, a Seagate engineer, explained the basic concept and functionalities of the suan pan. He also demonstrated a method to construct an abacus out of craft wood and beads.

Interest in science is universal, innate to human curiosity. This year, for the first time, two science projects were invited to take part in the booth activities.

The first is Zometool, an ingenious system of components used to construct toys or sophisticated modeling for science. It is the only device that can model "quasicrystal," a complex structure that is ordered but not periodic. Under the motto of "Art & Science at play," participants were encouraged to experiment. Zometool Inc. is a Longmont based company.

The second is "Wind Energy," a project of the Cool Girls Science and Art Club, which is dedicated to encourage elementary school girls in science. Those who completed a "Wind Energy" project at the booth were awarded a pin-wheels.

The activity booths proved to be highly popular.

Free food-tasting ended the festivities. A-PAL handed out 1,250 food boxes, prepared and supplied by: Thai-Shi House and Lee Yuan Chinese Cuisine of Boulder; China Buffet; Sakura; Gho's Asian Bistro; and Crazy Express of Longmont; and the United Chinese Restaurant in Thornton.

Erick Finnestead, the principal of Silver Creek High School, took the opportunity to recognize 10 language teachers invited from China to teach some 2,500 students from 14 schools in the St. Vrain Valley School District. Five of the schools are in Longmont.