

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Celebrating the Chinese New Year** *Year of the Rat Stamp Kicks Off Series That Runs Through 2019*



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SAN FRANCISCO, CA — In observance of the Chinese New Year, the U.S. Postal Service will debut a new stamp series for the 12 different animals in the Chinese calendar. The series will continue through 2019. The first 41-cent stamp in the series is for the Year of the Rat, which begins Feb. 7, 2008 and ends Jan. 25, 2009 and will be dedicated tomorrow in an 11 a.m. ceremony at the Nob Hill Masonic Center, 1111 California St.

The rat is the first of 12 animals associated with the Chinese calendar. According to legend, the animals raced across a river to determine their order in the cycle. The rat crossed by riding on the back of the ox, jumping ahead at the last minute to win the race.

“The start of the Lunar New Year is the biggest holiday of the year for more than 25 percent of the people in the world.” said Katherine C. Tobin, member of the U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors, who will dedicate the stamp. “It is a time of great celebration and reflection for many millions of Americans, including our nation’s oldest Chinese-American community here in San Francisco.”

Joining Tobin at the event will be Sidney Chan, president of the board of directors of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce; Claudine Cheng, former president of the Organization of Chinese Americans, Inc.; stamp designer Kam Mak; and Leung’s White Crane Kung Fu Association, which will perform a traditional White Crane Lion Dance.

People born in the year of a particular animal are said to share characteristics with that animal. Those born during the Year of the Rat are said to be adaptable, clever, ambitious and industrious. Persons born within the following date ranges can be said to have been born in the “Year of the Rat”:

Feb. 18, 1912 – Feb. 5, 1913  
Feb. 5, 1924 – Jan. 24, 1925  
Jan. 24, 1936 – Feb. 10, 1937  
Feb. 10, 1948 – January 28, 1949  
Jan. 28, 1960 – Feb. 14, 1961  
Feb. 15, 1972 – Feb. 2, 1973

Feb. 2, 1984 – Feb. 19, 1985  
Feb. 19, 1996 – Feb. 6, 1997

Famous Rats include Antonio Banderas, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, Claude Monet, Doris Day, David Duchovny, George Washington, Hugh Grant, Donna Summer, Prince Charles, Samuel L. Jackson, Sean Penn, and Olivia Newton-John.

Art director Ethel Kessler worked on the new series with Chinese-American illustrator Kam Mak, an artist who grew up in New York City's Chinatown and who now lives in Brooklyn. They decided to focus on common ways the Chinese New Year holiday is celebrated. To commemorate the Year of the Rat, they chose festive lanterns — in red, for luck — which are common decorations at such celebrations, where they are frequently hung in rows.

Kessler's design also incorporates elements from the previous series of stamps, using Clarence Lee's intricate paper-cut design of a rat and the Chinese character — drawn in grass-style calligraphy by Lau Bun — for "Rat."

The *Celebrating Lunar New Year* stamp sheet is available for purchase in Post Offices, on [usps.com](https://usps.com), and by calling 1-800-STAMP-24 starting tomorrow.

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**Please Note:** For broadcast quality video and audio, photo stills and other media resources, visit the USPS Newsroom at [www.usps.com/communications/newsroom/welcome.htm](https://www.usps.com/communications/newsroom/welcome.htm).

An independent federal agency, the U.S. Postal Service is the only delivery service that visits every address in the nation, 146 million homes and businesses, six days a week. It has 37,000 retail locations and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to cover its operating expenses. The Postal Service has annual revenues of \$75 billion and delivers nearly half the world's mail.

## **Celebrating Lunar New Year Fact Sheet**

### **Philatelic Products**

There are seven philatelic products available for this stamp issue:

- 571362 - First Day Cover/Full Pane, \$7.42
- 571364 - Cancelled Full Pane, \$7.42
- 571365 - Digital Color Postmark, \$1.50
- 571384 - Press Sheet, \$44.28
- 571391 - Ceremony Program, \$6.95
- 571399 - Cancellation Keepsake (DCP cover/pane), \$6.42
- 571394 - Limited Edition Note card set w/Envelopes and Stamps (12 each), \$12.99  
Set includes 12 note cards, 12 envelopes and a pane of the Lunar New Year stamps.

### **How to Order First-Day-Covers**

Stamp Fulfillment Services also offers first-day-covers for new stamp issues and Postal Service stationery items postmarked with the official first day of issue cancellation. Each item has an individual catalog number and is offered in the quarterly *USA Philatelic* catalog. Customers may request a free catalog by calling 800-STAMP-24 or writing to:

INFORMATION FULFILLMENT  
DEPT 6270  
US POSTAL SERVICE  
PO BOX 219014  
KANSAS CITY MO 64121-9014

### **How to Order First-Day-of-Issue Postmark**

Customers have 60 days to obtain the first-day-of-issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at their local post office, or at The Postal Store Web site at [usps.com/shop](http://usps.com/shop) or by calling 800-STAMP-24. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes (to themselves or others), and place them in a larger envelope addressed to:

CELEBRATING LUNAR NEW YEAR STAMP  
POSTMASTER  
SPECIAL CANCELLATIONS  
P O BOX 880066  
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94188-0066

After applying the first day of issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for the postmark. All orders must be postmarked by March 8, 2008.

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