

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Feb. 7, 2015

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## **Year of the Ram Forever Stamp Celebrates Lunar New Year**

*Lunar New Year Begins Feb. 19*

*A high-resolution image of the stamp is available for media use only by emailing: [james.t.wigdel@usps.gov](mailto:james.t.wigdel@usps.gov)*

SAN FRANCISCO — The U.S. Postal Service welcomes the Year of the Ram today by issuing the eighth of 12 stamps in its [Celebrating Lunar New Year series](#). The first-day-of-issue dedication ceremony for the Forever stamp took place today at the [Chinese Culture Center](#) in San Francisco.

The series will continue through 2019 with Forever stamps for the Year of the Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Boar. Year of the Ram is being issued as a souvenir sheet of 12 self-adhesive stamps.

"The Lunar New Year is an inspirational time to highlight our shared prosperity and reaffirm our City's commitment to ensuring that everyone can share in the success of San Francisco," said Mayor Lee. "I would like to thank the U.S. Postal Service for choosing our diverse and world class City to dedicate the Year of the Ram Forever stamp."

Joining Lee in dedicating the stamp were San Francisco Postmaster Raj Sanghera; Organization of Chinese-Americans Past National President Claudine Cheng; Chinese Chamber of Commerce Supervisory Board President Eddir Au; Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association President Song Ning Ma; Organization of Chinese-Americans Acting Chief Executive Officer Ken Lee and stamp artist Kam Mak.

"For millions of people around the world, Lunar New Year is one of the most important holidays of the year," said Postmaster Sanghera. "In my opinion, the Year of the Ram Commemorative Forever stamp is one of the most beautifully designed, colorful, festive and majestic stamps ever issued by the Postal Service. Starting today, this lovely illustration will be carried on letters and packages to millions of households and businesses throughout America. As you use them, we hope that the 'Year of the Ram' brings each of you good health, great joy and boundless prosperity."

"One of my favorite Lunar New Year pastimes was to raid my grandmother's tray of togetherness with all of the wonderful treats inside," said Mak. "She would remind my sisters and I to save some for the visiting guests. People born under the Year of the Ram are artistically talented and have an appreciation for the fine arts. The artwork depicting the beautifully hand-lacquered tray of togetherness with the intricate inlay of flowers and bird, express these traits vividly."

Art director Ethel Kessler of Bethesda, MD, worked on the series with illustrator Kam Mak, an artist who grew up

in New York City's Chinatown and now lives in Brooklyn. The artwork focuses on some of the common ways the Lunar New Year holiday is celebrated. For the Year of the Ram, (Feb. 19, 2015 – Feb. 7, 2016), the illustration — originally created using oil paints on panel — depicts a wooden candy tray known as a *chuen-hop* or Tray of Togetherness. The tray is filled with dried fruits, candies, and other treats to provide a sweet beginning to the New Year.

The ram, alternately referred to as a sheep or a goat, is one of 12 animals associated with the Chinese lunar calendar. According to an old 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. Next came the ox, then the tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake and horse, followed by the ram in eighth place.

People born in the year of a particular animal are said to share characteristics with that animal. Individuals born during the Year of the Ram are said to be shy, creative and wise.

As the most important holiday of the year for many Asian communities around the world, the Lunar New Year is celebrated primarily by people of Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Tibetan and Mongolian heritage. Images associated with some of these widespread customs are depicted in the Celebrating Lunar New Year series.

In the United States and elsewhere, the occasion is marked in various ways across many cultures; parades featuring enormous and vibrantly painted papier-mâché dragons, parties, and other special events are common. Many families set out a candy tray known as the *chuen-hop* or Tray of Togetherness like the one depicted in the stamp art to provide guests with an assortment of dried fruits and candies for a sweet beginning to the new year. Drums are played to celebrate this time of renewed hope for the future, with drumsticks sometimes painted red for luck. Firecrackers are set off to ward off evil spirits. Red envelopes (*hong bao*) containing money are given as gifts to children and loved ones.

The U.S. Postal Service introduced its Celebrating Lunar New Year series in 2008 with the Year of the Rat stamp. The Year of the Ram is being issued as a Forever stamp. This Forever stamp will always be equal in value to the current First-Class Mail 1-ounce price.

Customers may purchase the stamps at [usps.com/stamps](https://usps.com/stamps), the [Postal Store](#), at 800-STAMP24 (800-782-6724) and at Post Offices nationwide or visit [ebay.com/stamps](https://ebay.com/stamps) to shop for a wide variety of postage stamps and collectibles.

### **Ordering First-Day-of-Issue Postmarks**

Customers have 60 days to obtain the first-day-of-issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at their local Post Office, at The Postal Store website at [usps.com/shop](https://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:

Lunar New Year: Year of the Ram Stamp  
Attention: Station Manager  
Chinatown Station  
867 Stockton St.  
San Francisco, CA 94108-9998

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 up to a quantity of 50. For more than 50, customers are charged 5 cents each. All orders must be postmarked by March 31, 2015.

### **Ordering First-Day Covers**

The Postal Service 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, online at [usps.com/shop](https://usps.com/shop) or by calling 800-782-6724. Customers may request a free catalog by calling 800-782-6724 or writing to:

U.S. Postal Service  
Catalog Request  
PO Box 219014  
Kansas City, MO 64121-9014

## Philatelic Products

There are 11 philatelic products for this stamp issue:



588924, [Framed Art](#), \$39.95.



588930, [Ceremony Program](#), \$6.95.



- 588906, [Press Sheet with Die cut](#), \$70.56, (print quantity 500).  
 588908, [Press Sheet without Die cut](#), \$70.56 (print quantity 500).



- 588910, [Digital Color Postmark Keepsake](#) (2 Sheets of stamps, 1 DCP), \$13.95.



- 588916, [First-Day Cover](#), \$0.93.  
 588918, First-Day Cover (Full Pane), \$8.38.  
 588919, First-Day Cover Cancelled Full Pane, \$8.38.



588921, [Digital Color Postmark](#), \$1.64.

588931, Stamp Deck Card, \$0.95.

588932, Stamp Deck Card with Digital Color Postmark, \$1.99.

Many of this year's other stamps may be viewed on Facebook at [facebook.com/USPSStamps](https://facebook.com/USPSStamps), via Twitter [@USPSstamps](https://twitter.com/USPSstamps).

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