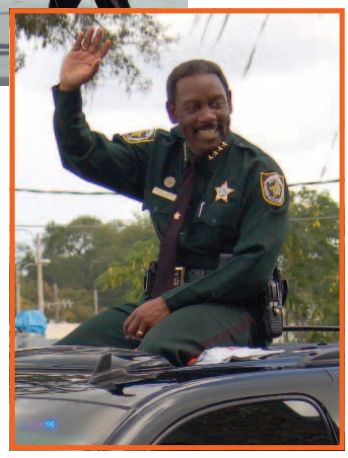
◀ Hung Fut Hung Man Fei Martial Arts Dragon dance team

CAACF Dance Troupe

City of Orlando Commissioner Patty Sheehan

City of Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer



Orange County Sheriff Jerry Demings

City of Orlando Commissioner Tony Ortiz

Orange County Comptroller Martha O Haynie

Orange County Commissioner Fred Brummer

City of Orlando Commissioner Phil Diamond

Abraham Li, Taipei Economic and Cultural Office

Wendy Mayer, Mills 50 Board of Directors

David Mui, 1st Oriental Supermarket

Vincent Nguyen and Patty Sheehan with Miss Vietnam Florida

CAACF CHARGE Dragon Boat Team

Agnes Chau, Angie Chow, and Pauline Ho

Orlando Celebrates 2012 Lunar New Year

■ ***By Carol Lim*** ***By J.Rob McCullough, Biff Godfrey, Trung Nguyen, John Chung, and C.K. Lau***

It's not every Sunday that you hear the sound of distant cymbals and drums on Hillcrest Street or see Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer, Commissioner Patty Sheehan, Orange County Sheriff Jerry Demings, Commissioner Tony Ortiz, bright yellow, red and green dragons, lions, dancers, a dragon boat team, Taiko drummers and hundreds of children and adults in Asian costumes stream by your house.

But they did on Feb. 5, 2012 for the city's first Dragon Parade and Lunar New Year Festival. 2012 is the Year of the Dragon for Vietnamese, Chinese and Koreans, but organizers wanted this celebration to include everyone. According to *www.history.com*, the dragon is a Chinese

Orlando Taiko Dojo

Universal Orlando Resort - ASPIRE

Buddha's Light International Association - YAD

Taiwanese Chamber of Commerce of Greater Orlando

CAACF Dance Troupe

The Chinese School of CAACF

Spring Mushroom Dance – Orlando Chinese Professional Association

Hula Hoop – Dragon Legend Acrobats

Filipino Student Association of UCF

Aerial Silk – Tiffany Tang from REACH of Central Florida

Vovinam Vietnamese Martial Arts

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Asian Student Association of UCF

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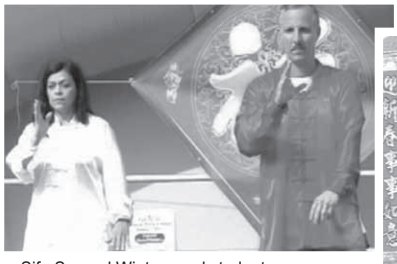
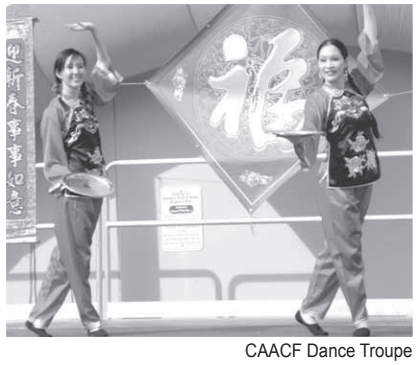
Meimen Qigong Culture Center



Sifu Samuel Winters and student



CAACF Dance Troupe

Orange County Democratic Party - DEC

The Chinese School of CAACF

The Chinese School of CAACF

1st Oriental Supermarket

Tai Chi Fan Dance – Hans Foundations Senior Group

symbol of good luck, fortune and prosperity.

The date fell on Super Bowl Sunday, but it also was super in other ways for Central Florida's Asian American communities and the City of Orlando. Mayor Dyer and Commissioner Sheenhan signed a proclamation declaring the day as the Dragon Parade and Lunar New Year Festival Day.

"This event was a dream come true for me. An Asian festival has been something I have always wanted to do. I saw the dragon and lion ceremony when I was first elected over ten years ago. I thought it was something special, and that more people needed to see this wonderful celebration of culture in our community," Sheehan said in a recent interview.

"The Orlando Police Department estimated that there were over 3,000 people in attendance," Sheehan said.

With Sheehan's support, organizers Mills 50 Main Street, a thriving, emerging Orlando business district; the Chinese American Association of Central Florida, R.E.A.C.H of Central Florida, an Asian culture non-profit; and Y.E.S.S, a non-profit working with youth and seniors led the way. Dyer, Sheehan, Demings, Ortiz, more than 50 community groups and businesses, including Universal Studios Resort and Bright House Networks and student volunteers jumped in to produce the Dragon Parade and Lunar New Year Festival.

Starting at 11 a.m., parade went down Hillcrest to North Mills Avenue and through the festival to kick off the celebration.

"We were there to represent State Farm and their continued support for the Asian community. I thought the parade was historic for Orlando and exceeded my expectations," said Christine Vella, a State Farm agent in the Mills 50 district.

"It promoted a sense of unity. I was extremely proud of everyone who attended. Not just Asians, but people of all races. I was also happy to see our local community leaders come to participate, too," said Valerie Boey, Florida chapter president of the Asian American Journalists Association. Boey, who also is a FOX 35 news reporter, emceed the festival and parade with Bruce Wang, Angie Chow and Agnes Chau, Y.E.S.S. president.

Esquire Legal Group

Bento Cafe

Florida College of Integrative Medicine Florida

Bayridge Sushi and Steakhouse

Title Sponsor - 1st Oriental Supermarket

Chris Vella State Farm Insurance

Commissioner Sheenhan reads out the proclamation signed by Mayor Buddy Dyer to declare the day as the Dragon Parade and Lunar New Year Festival Day

"I thought the event was absolutely fabulous. The Asian entertainment, food and displays made me feel like I was visiting Chinatown," Boey said. "It was wonderful! It made me feel like I was among family, seeing so many Asian families."

For others, the event was groundbreaking.

"I thought it was an historic event in Orlando's history, where the Asian American community came to celebrate together the Lunar New Year, one of the biggest holidays in the world," said Ricky Ly, food writer at www.tastychomps.com.

Dragon, lion, folk, fan, silk, mushroom, Indian silver plate, Filipino Tinikling dances, a violin duet, CAACF's Chinese School Chorus, Tai Chi swords, martial arts, Kung Fu, Taiko drummers, Mei Men exercises and hula hoop acrobats filled the festival's main stage from noon to 3 p.m. Visitors chowed down on Asian and fair food--Korean tacos, steamed chicken, rice noodles, Japanese sushi, Vietnamese grilled pork sandwiches, food from Panda Express, burgers, ice cream and funnel cakes.

The festival introduced visitors to local businesses and nonprofits. Children made paper dragons. You could also write your name or favorite phrase in Chinese characters, relax with an Asian massage, shop for orchids and bamboo plants or pose for photos with Miss Vietnam Florida, local celebrities or a very tall man dressed as an emperor.

"It is due to your collective belief in the vision of this event that led to the success we had on Sunday," wrote Pauline Ho, CAACF President; Joanne Grant, Mills 50 Executive Director; Agnes Chau, Y.E.S.S. director and Priscilla Leung, R.E.A.C.H. President. "I was humble to be part of this great team in organizing this event. Besides meeting the Central Florida's Asian American communities and community leaders, I was extremely glad to meet families from Tampa, Jacksonville and even Miami. I hope this event would be one of them who draw people from other regions to Orlando to celebrate the Lunar New Year," added Pauline Ho.

Carol Lim is a volunteer weather watcher for WFLA-TV, the NBC affiliate in Tampa, Florida and contributes video, photos and reports to www.tbo.com SNAP section. Carol is Chinese American. She is a former weekend morning news anchor for SNN-6 in Sarasota, Florida and former KBIM-TV news reporter in Roswell, New Mexico. The New Mexico Associated Press Broadcasters recognized her work with the Associated Press First Place Spot News Award in 1990. Carol is a graduate of the University of Texas and the University of South Florida with a BA in Mass Communications. She is a member of the Asian American Journalists Association and lives in Tampa.

YouTube Watch this on ***www.YouTube.com/AsiaTrend***

CAACF Board of Director 2012-13 (www.orlandochinese.org)

Emcees: Kim Tran and Bruce Wang

C.K. Lau and Valerie Boey

Y.E.S.S. – Youth Enrichment and Senior Services

REACH of Central Florida

These local media news coverages showcased the Dragon Parade Lunar New Year Festival and the richness of the Asian American culture.

Asian American Journalist Association - *http://v.tbo.com/MediaItemView.aspx?id=2187812*

Fox 35 News media story - *http://www.myfoxorlando.com/dpp/news/local/020612-orlando-dragon-parade-and-festival*

Orlando Sentinel Florida 360 - *http://www.orlandosentinel.com/multimedia/os-chinese-new-year-pictures-02052012,0,1670719.photogallery*

Orlando Magazine - *http://spotted.orlandomagazine.com/photos/index.php?id=41448*

Parade Video by Asia Trend Magazine - *http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhUmn5EhO1k*

Volunteer: Delta Phi Lambda Sorority, Inc

Volunteers: REACH of Central Florida, The Chinese School of CAACF, and University High School Students

The organizers would like to thank the following sponsors for their support: 1st Oriental Supermarket, Dr. Puxiao Cen, Dong A Corporation, Mercedes-Benz of South Orlando, Florida General Alliance of Fujian Fraternity USA, Bright house Networks, Asia Trend Magazine, City of Orlando Families, Parks and Recreation, Colonial Photo & Hobby Inc and Track Shack.