Daily **Life**

First-Year Experience Programs host Lunar New Year celebration

by Jaylyn Davis
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
SHE/HER/HERS
iue25001@uconn.edu



To celebrate the Lunar New Year, the University of Connecticut's first-year programs hosted an event on Feb. 17 in room C80 at the Information Technology Building.

The event's environment was very festive. Each table in the room had a Chinese lantern, and Chinese music was played. The event had three stations that attendees could go to: flower decorating, origami and Mahjong. The event also had Chinese food, including rice cakes and chocolate coins.

The flower decorating station was where most attendees spent their time at. At the flower decorating station, attendees used scissors to cut out flowers. While cutting out the flowers, people conversed with each other in diverse languages, including English and Chinese.

At the origami station, attendees had the opportunity to make Chinese lanterns, origami dogs and origami cats. The Chinese lanterns came in various sizes. Some were small like bath bombs, and others were as big as soccer balls. The origami dogs came in numerous types. Some of the origami dog types were French bulldogs, dachshunds, cocker spaniels and border collies. The origami cats did not have a variety of types, but they were still a nice addition to the origami station.

During the event, not many attendees made origami dogs or origami cats. However, tons of them made Chinese lanterns. Just like at the flower decorating station, most people who spent their time at the origami station talked to one another and shared happiness together.

The Mahjong station was not visited often. However, some attendees played the game. Mahjong is a traditional Chinese board game with tiles, typically played by four people. In the game, three players get 13 tiles, and the fourth player acts as a dealer and gets 14 tiles. When it is a player's turn, the player discards a tile and grabs a new one from the wall of tiles. Players can also obtain a discarded tile to complete a set such as a Chow or a Pong. The players play the game until a player completes a 14-tile hand. When that happens, they call out, "Mahjong."

The event was very enjoyable for those who attended. It was also an excellent way to promote holidays that are celebrated by Asian communities. At the beginning of the event, Castella Copeland, a student development specialist and the assistant director of the First-Year Experience Program, shared her thoughts on the importance of hosting events like the "Lunar New Year Celebration."

"I think it's really important to make sure our students have a sense of belonging and a place to celebrate," Copeland said. "I know we have a lot of students who might be coming from international regions, and this is a big celebration for them. So, I think it's really important that we have this space, so people can learn about the celebration aspect of it."

The event was also an effort to help teach students about the holiday and bring students together, Copeland said.

"And it's really welcoming for everyone, whether people are learning more about what Lunar New Year is or are coming from a lot of the different international nations and want a place to have a sense of community and come together to celebrate with other students on campus," Copeland said. "So, doing this event was really intentional. It's run by the students in collaboration with our office to make sure that we're really having enough end experience."

Nayla Anderson, a fourth-semester student majoring in marine sciences, said the event was very relaxing.

"We really liked building our lanterns," Anderson said. "We got here a little late for the origami, but it's kind of a relaxing experience."

Events like this Lunar New Year celebration are very important. Not only do they promote international cultures, but they allow students from international regions to have a shared space to embrace their heritage and celebrate the holidays that are traditional to their home lives.



Students and guests participate in events for celebrating the Chinese New Year in the ITE building. The FYE program and ICSA collaborated to bring games, crafts and food to enjoy.

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