A buzz of excitement rippled through the crowd of children as they craned their necks to see the colorful figure emerging through the gym door. Squeals of delight erupted as an elaborately decorated orange lion snaked through the room, dancing to the beat of a thumping drum.

The dancers from the Huong Viet Lion Dance Team were performing in the 14th Annual Lunar New Year celebration on Thursday, February 2, 2012 sponsored by The County of Alameda, Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART), and the Asian Community Collaborative (ACC). The event was organized to share the Asian Pacific Islander culture with neighbors, school children, senior citizens and employees.

More than 350 elementary school children from Oakland and Albany packed the gym at the Lincoln Square Recreational Center in Oakland’s Chinatown for the Lunar New Year celebration. Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson began the program by welcoming the children and families. Other speakers included Alameda County Supervisor Wilma Chan; Mayor Jean Quan; BART Director Bob Franklin, District 3; BART Director Robert Raburn, District 4; and BART General Manager Grace Cunican.

After the lion dancing and official greetings, the audience was treated to a performance by a Korean Senior Choir, a plate spinner, a clown named Goofball and a Chinese folk dancer.

This Chinese New Year 2012 ushers in the Year of the Water Dragon. Water exerts a calming influence on the Dragon’s innate fire. Water Dragons are more open to other people’s opinions than other Dragons, which gives them the ability to channel their personal charisma into real leadership qualities. According to the Chinese Zodiac, people born in the “Year of the Dragon” are mightiest of the signs. Dragons symbolize traits such as dominance and ambition. They are passionate, driven, unafraid of challenges, and willing to take risks. Considering their hard-working nature, Dragons are healthy overall. Dragons prefer to be leaders. They will give into love, but will not give up their independence. Dragons are most compatible with the Monkey or Rat.

Photographs from the event:
Two members of the Huong Viet Lion Dance Team perform for the children.
Supervisor Carson welcomes guests to the Lunar New Year celebration. He is joined by Mina Sanchez of Supervisor Carson’s office and Julie Yim of BART.
Joanna Kim-Selby of the East Bay Korean American Senior Services Center introduces the Korean Senior Choir.
“Happy Chef” Kemin Xia spins 12 plates simultaneously and wows the crowd.

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Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson represents the Fifth District, which includes Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville, Piedmont, and parts of Oakland (North Oakland, Rockridge, Grand Lake, Fruitvale, and Dimond District neighborhoods). For more information about District 5 and Supervisor Keith Carson, please call (510) 272-6695 or visit http://www.keithcarson.org/