

# Cultural News

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## New Year Celebrations Around the World

### **New Year's Eve**

In many places people stay up late to see the old year out and the new year in. Almost everywhere in the world church bells ring, horns toot, whistles blow, sirens shriek. London's Trafalgar Square and New York City's Times Square swarm with crowds of happy, noisy people. The hullabaloo expresses people's high spirits at holiday time.

### **Chinese New Year**

Many Chinese children dress in new clothes to celebrate the Chinese New Year. People carry lanterns and join in a huge parade led by a silk dragon, the Chinese symbol of strength. According to legend, the dragon hibernates most of the year, so people throw firecrackers to keep the dragon awake.

In the Chinese lunar calendar each of the 12 years is named after an animal. According to Legend, Lord Buddha asked all the animals to come to him before he left the earth. Only 12 animals came to wish him farewell, and as a reward Buddha named a year after each one.

### **Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur**

In September or October, Jews believe that God opens the Book of Life for 10 days, starting with Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) and ending with Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). During these days, the holiest in the Jewish year, Jews try to atone for any wrongdoing and to forgive others. A ram's horn trumpet, known as the shofar, is blown before and during Rosh Hashanah and at the conclusion of Yom Kippur.

### **Songkran**

In Lao, Cambodia and Thailand a special three-day water festival on April 13–15 marks Songkran, the Buddhists' celebration of the new year. Parades feature huge statues of Buddha that spray water on passersby. In small villages, young people throw water at each other for fun. People also release fish into rivers as an act of kindness.

At Songkran, people tie strings around each other's wrists to show their respect. A person can have as many as 25 or 30 strings on one wrist, each from a different person. The strings are supposed to be left on until they fall off naturally.

### **New Year History**

Ancient Greeks began their new year with the new moon after June 21. Before the time of Julius Caesar the Roman new year started on March 1. In most European countries during the Middle Ages the new year began on March 25, the day of the Feast of the Annunciation.

### **More New Year Traditions**

- Indonesia also has two New Year celebrations — the official one on January 1 and another on the Islamic New Year, whose date varies from year to year.
- The Russian Orthodox Church observes the New Year according to the Julian calendar, which places the day on January 14.
- In Vietnam the new year usually begins in February.
- Iran celebrates New Year's Day on March 21.
- Each of the religious groups in India has its own date for the beginning of the year. One Hindu New Year, Baisakhi, comes sometime in April or May.
- The people in Morocco observe the beginning of the year on the tenth day of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic year.
- The Koreans celebrate their New Year the first three days in January.



## JANUARY 2018 CALENDAR

NATIONAL BRAILLE LITERACY MONTH  
CELEBRATION OF LIFE MONTH  
FINANCIAL WELLNESS MONTH

- 1- New Years (World)
- 2-4- Mahayana New Year (Buddhist)
- 4- World Braille Day
- 5- Guru Gobindh Singh birthday (Sikh)
- 6- Nativity of Christ (Armenian Orthodox)
- 7- Feast of the Nativity (Orthodox Christian)
- 8- Earth's Rotation Day (World)
- 13- Korean American Day (US)
- 13-20- Hanukkah (Jewish)
- 15- Martin Luther King Day (US)
- 19- World Day of Migrants and Refugees
- 20-21- Bald Eagle Appreciation Days (US)
- 21- World Religion Day (Baha'i)
- 22- Vasant Pachanmi (Hindu)
- 25- Conversion of St. Paul (Christian)
- 31- Tu BiShvat (Jewish)

## Korean American Day

Korean American Day on January 13 commemorates the arrival of the first Korean immigrants to the United States in 1903. The day also honors the Korean Americans' immense contributions to every aspect of society.

In 1882, the United States and Korea signed a treaty establishing a relationship of peace, friendship and commerce. While this led to Korean diplomats, students, politicians and businessmen visiting the United States, few felt compelled to stay.

It wasn't until December of 1902 the SS Gaelic that 102 Korean immigrants set sail for Honolulu, Hawaii. These families initiated the first wave of Korean immigration resulting in over 7,500 immigrants over the next two years.

They served their communities and their country during World Wars I and II and the Korean War. During these times, more Koreans made the decision to emigrate from their homeland; some, as wives to U.S. servicemen, others were adopted as children.

Just to name a few, Ahn Chang Ho – also known as Dosan, one of the earlier immigrants, Ho is credited with establishing the Willows Korean Aviation Corps in the United States which later helped establish the Korean Airforce.

Sammy Lee – Olympic two-time gold medalist in diving (1948 – London) and (1952 – Helsinki).

Wendy Gramm – Served as U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission chair under Presidents Reagan and Bush I.

Judge Herbert Y.C. Choy – First Asian American appointed to U.S. Federal Court (Court of Appeals Ninth District) in 1974.

David Hyun – Architect charged with revitalizing Little Tokyo in Los Angeles.

Sang Hyun Lee – First tenured Asian American professor at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Hines Ward, Jr. – Professional football player for the Pittsburgh Steelers



### HOW TO OBSERVE

Find out more or share your experience by using #KoreanAmericanDay on social media.

### HISTORY

In 2003, President George W. Bush issued a proclamation in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the first Korean immigrants. In 2005, the U.S. House and Senate passed simple resolutions in support of Korean American Day. Since then states across the country have passed bills declaring January 13 as an annual celebration of Korean American Day.

<https://nationaldaycalendar.com/korean-american-day-january-13/>

## New Staff Interpreter Profile: Teresa Tuyet Thai



Teresa Tuyet Thai is our newest addition to the MIS Vietnamese Medical Interpreting team. Teresa came to the US at a very young age. She attended Sacramento City College and Sacramento State University, studying Business.

In the process of being hired on with UC Davis Health, she attended the 40 hours Connecting Worlds Medical Interpreter Training course, hosted by the MIS department.

Teresa has always been a to-go person, when her family, friends and neighbors came calling for interpreting assistance. She recalled an incident when she was at the movies with her siblings. She was approached to interpret for a woman who was going into labor in the parking lot of the theatre. She said that was a very interesting experience that she will never forget.

Teresa's biggest accomplishments are her three beautiful daughters. They are her pride and joy.

During Teresa's free time, she enjoys cooking, especially traditional Vietnamese cuisine. She loves to take her bike for a stroll because it relaxes her.

Teresa finds pleasure in creating a comfortable and trusting environment with those within the Vietnamese community. Being a medical interpreter has been a mixture of positive experience for her and she enjoys what she does.

In Teresa's own words, "Joining the MIS team and UC Davis Medical Center has probably been the best thing that could have happened to me. I am very grateful to be part of an amazing diverse team of interpreters".