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Students celebrate Chinese New Year with crafts, cooking

By *health0052001*
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KINGS MILLS ? For Christina Shepherd, bringing the Chinese New Year to her fourth-grade classroom meant feeding a hungry child.

The Kings Mills Elementary teacher started celebrating the holiday in class in 1991 when a student shared a secret.

?He revealed to me that his family wasn?t eating from Friday at lunch until Monday at breakfast because his family couldn?t afford it,? she said.

Shepherd sprang into action to help the child, organizing a wide array of fun Friday activities for her class to nourish stomachs and minds.

?Every time you looked around I was cooking something on Friday afternoon,? she said and laughed.

This year, her class joined forces with Dana Strunk?s first-graders for what Shepherd describes as ?a taste of China.?

The two-hour open activity found students switching between five stations. They cooked batches of stir-fry beef and broccoli utilizing traditional Chinese cooking utensils.

They also used red paint to create Chinese words on yellow paper, employing two colors associated with celebrating the holiday, and created words on red paper using glue and gold glitter.

?The reason we did the painting is because when you see the beautiful letters that you see in China, a lot of times it?s been done with a paintbrush and not a pen,? she said. ?It?s more authentic, plus, kids love to paint.?

Students also made a dragon puppet and craft-foam fortune cookies and Shepherd gave insights into this year, The Year of The Tiger, as well as the animals associated with other years

A ?Families of China? video offered a behind-the-doors look at traditional Chinese families in the Cincinnati area.

?There?s just something they need to see to understand,? Shepherd said.

Fourth-graders led the way, working alongside their younger schoolmates to complete each task.

?We?ve done a couple of things with these first-graders,? Shepherd said. ?They?ve almost become like sister classes.?

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