



Township of Belleville
New Jersey

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For Immediate release

Belleville to Commemorate 150th Anniversary of First Chinese New Year on East Coast

Virtual Fireworks and Speeches Planned Set for 7:15 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 12

BELLEVILLE, NJ – February 10, 2021 – Belleville will celebrate the Chinese New Year on Friday, February 12, celebrating a time when the township opened its arms to a group of wayfaring Chinese immigrants.

The Facebook Live event is set for 7:15 p.m. via [facebook.com/OfficialBellevilleNJ](https://www.facebook.com/OfficialBellevilleNJ). There will be virtual fireworks and a video message from Mayor Michael Melham, as well as special guests, to usher in the Year of the Ox.

This holiday traditionally celebrated with fireworks, dragons, lanterns and festive food can be traced to 1871 in Belleville.

As virtual fireworks explode over the Township (virtually), Melham will speak about the long history of Chinese settlers who made their way to Belleville generations ago.

Belleville provided sanctuary at a time when anti-Chinese sentiment was rampant around the nation – even though these hard-working immigrants had given their blood, sweat and tears to help complete the Transatlantic railroad connecting the East/West Coast in Post-Civil War America.

The event is being supported by the Museum of Chinese in America in New York and the New York office of the Chinese Consul General.

Then on Monday, Feb. 22, Belleville will light and launch 150 Chinese lanterns, commemorating the 150-year anniversary, from the municipal stadium complex – at a time when COVID-19 safeguards limit gatherings for such ceremonies to 150 people.

“The Chinese immigrants were welcomed in Belleville at a time when other communities turned their backs on them, which is a testament to Belleville’s historic temperament of inclusion and acceptance,” Melham said. “They not only settled here, but they brought their values and traditions and enriched this community. We honor those traditions and we celebrate Belleville’s tolerance and understanding – then and now.”

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