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## Fort Lee Residents Celebrate The Chinese Autumn Moon Festival

DIAL UP BROAD BAND

September 23, 2007

About a thousand people headed to the Chinese Service Center's Moon Festival Saturday night at the Fort Lee Community Center.

There was Chinese food, lion dancers, Tai Chi demonstrations, dancing and music in honor of the Moon Festival, which is also known as the Mid-Autumn Festival or the Chinese Thanksgiving. It's a lunar calendar holiday that began as a way for farmers to celebrate the season's harvest.

"It's a very old tradition celebrated by most Asian countries who celebrate the full moon, which symbolizes unity among friends and family," explained Baowen Yang of the Chinese Service Center.

"It's like our Chinese thanksgiving," said William Gong of Fort Lee. "Traditionally on August 15th is when they have a full moon and you make big and plentiful dishes, so my wife and I made a lot of food for the kids."

It's also a tradition to eat mooncakes on this holiday. Inside each pastry is an egg yolk, which symbolizes the moon.

The CSE's goal is to promote Chinese culture. The group has three Chinese schools in the tri-state area, but says it organized the Moon Festival for the first time this year in Fort Lee so that it could bring the Chinese community in Northern New Jersey together.

"It's a celebration of harvest, but nowadays harvest can be anything: harvest of your knowledge, harvest for your friendship, and, in this case, it's definitely a harvest for friendship because the Chinese Service Center has been around for 35 years and it's about time we reach out," said Yang.

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"It's kind of rare that we have a cultural event in our town, so we just jumped at the opportunity to be here tonight," said Fort Lee resident Ying Chan.

"It's really important to us," said Derek Sung of Ridgewood. "You can celebrate the full moon. It's really fun, plus you get to eat mooncakes."

- Lisa Yip

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