

**CULTURE AND TRADITIONS:** *Shining lights mark Chinese celebration*

# Families gather for traditional festival of thanksgiving

BY MIKE ADLER  
Staff Writer

Bob Co separates the two halves of his fragile winged-horse lantern and gingerly lights a candle fastened inside.

Its frame covered by coloured cellophane, the lantern is fancier than the folding paper cylinders typically sold for THE Mid-Autumn Festival, a time when lights appear around York Region's Chinese community.

Like the paper ones, though, the horse lantern is far from being sturdy — not the safest thing to carry with you on a stick or hang from a door.

"That is why it is very dangerous," Co warned a visitor to his C.J.K. Vegetarian and Fine Food store at Market Village mall in Markham.

These days, a safer and battery-powered electric light often takes a candle's place inside lanterns marking the 15th day of the eighth lunar month of the Chinese calendar — which is tomorrow night.

Of course, when Co was growing up no one worried about fire in the lanterns, he said.

"Every kid would take this and go around the street."

Quite a few local people seem to be carrying on the tradition.

When a portable at Markham's Highgate Public School burned to the ground during the festivities last year, the festive lanterns came under suspicion. Residents also called police to report "unexplained flames" in school yards, parks and even the Markham Civic Centre grounds.

The town's fire department re-issued a set of recommendations this week warning participants that using open flames can be dangerous.

"Do not place the burning materials within 10 feet of any combustibles," the warning stated. "Make sure the flame remains small and is centered in the container."

The festival is one of thanksgiving and a gathering of family, celebrating the beauty of the full moon and of a "lady on the moon" who legend says saved the world from the rule of her husband.

Her husband was a tyrant preparing to drink a potion granting him eter-

nal life, but his wife drank it first and escaped to the moon.

In her honour, rich and filling mooncakes of lotus paste or mixed nuts are given to relatives during the festival.



Bob Co with his winged-horse lantern.

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All entries must be at either the *Markham Economist & Sun* or *Stouffville Tribune* by October 13. Entries must include the participant's name, age, address and phone number.

The winners will be published in the October 26 edition of the papers.

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