

## Alliance Française de Lynchburg Newsletter Spring 2007

### Mardi Gras

Tuesday, February 20, 2007

6:30 p.m. until 9:00 p.m.

At the home of Urs and Michelle Gabathuler  
2225 Surrey Place, Lynchburg



The Alliance Française de Lynchburg has been celebrating Mardi Gras for many years with a get-together. This year, we invite our members to wear a costume and/or a mask of their liking and participate in the “most original costume” contest. **Each member in costume will receive a small prize!**

**Entertainment:** This year, we will ask all our members to participate in a game: “Qui suis-je?” (Who am I?) Upon arrival, all members will have an index card attached to their back. On the index card, there will be the name of a famous French personality. This figure may be dead or alive, male or female, an artist, a royal, a writer, a famous actor/actress, or a contemporary. Each party participant will have until 8 p.m. to find out who his or her “new identity” is by asking other people at the party Yes/No questions. You may ask, “Am I dead? Am I alive? Am I a woman? Am I a king? Am I a contemporary politician? Am I Victor Hugo?” etc. As soon as you have guessed your identity correctly, you will be allowed to wear your index card - and therefore your identity - on your front. At around 8 p.m., we will find out how many of our party goers have found out who they are. All “winners” will receive a small prize.

**Foods and drinks:** We are asking all members to bring their favorite hors d’oeuvre, variety of cheese and crackers, French breads and patés, or desserts. Several volunteers have already agreed to bring us a supply of crepes and toppings. Wine and other beverages will be supplied by our organization.

Who will be king or queen of the party? The Alliance Française will provide a King Cake that has one “baby” in it. Therefore, one of our party goers will - we hope - find the “baby” in their slice of cake. Please make sure to tell Michelle that you found the “baby”, so we may honorably crown you as the “Roi ou Reine de la Fete.”

The Mardi Gras party is a free event for members of the Alliance Française de Lynchburg. If you like to bring a guest, please pay the fee of \$5.00 at the door.

The history of Mardi Gras began long before Europeans set foot in the New World. In mid February the ancient Romans celebrated the *Lupercalia*, a circus like festival not entirely unlike the Mardi Gras we are familiar with today. When Rome embraced Christianity, the early Church fathers decided it was better to incorporate certain aspects of pagan rituals into the new faith rather than attempt to abolish them altogether. Carnival became a period of abandon and merriment that preceded the penance of Lent, thus giving a Christian interpretation to the ancient custom. The word “carnival” means as much as a “good-bye to meat” and the festival was the last opportunity to eat and drink whatever one wanted before the long six weeks of lent.

Mardi Gras came to America in 1699 with the French explorer Iberville. Mardi Gras had been celebrated in Paris since the Middle Ages, where it was a major holiday. Centuries before the wildly popular celebration hit New Orleans, the French were getting crazy for the approach of Lent. The most popular “Carnaval” in France

is in Nice. This city hosts a wild 10-day celebration featuring daily parades, concerts, street theater and more. Dating back to the Middle Ages, people from around the globe have been descending on this gorgeous French Riviera city each year to cut loose. This year, the Nice Carnaval 2007 starts February 16 and features a mix of parades, festivities and events. Each day, the streets are filled with visitors from around the globe. Street performers dazzle passersby, vendors sell their wares and the scent of nicois cuisine fills the air. This long-running Carnaval celebration is in its 123rd year.

During the late 1700's, pre-Lenten masked balls and festivals were common in New Orleans while it was under French rule. However when New Orleans came under Spanish rule the custom was banned. In 1803 New Orleans came under the U.S. flag. The prohibition against masked festivals continued until 1823 when the Creole populace convinced the governor to permit masked balls. In 1827 street masking was again legalized.

## Le Grand Concours et la Distribution des Prix

Thursday, April 19, 2007

Once again, the students of our member French teachers will participate in the annual "Grand Concours", our local annual essay contest. In the past few years, more than 500 French students of all levels wrote essays on given topics, and the top 25% of these students and their parents were invited to a festive awards ceremony and reception at VES.

This year, the actual writing of essays will take place on March 28 at many public and private middle and high schools in Lynchburg City, Bedford County, Amherst County, and Campbell County.

**The awards ceremony and related events will take place on**



**Thursday, April 19, 2007  
at 5 p.m. at the V.E.S. Chapel,  
V.E.S. Road**

Reception will follow in the library.

**Social gathering and dinner  
at 7:00 p.m.  
at the Main Street Eatery**

We are pleased to announce that M. Pierre Hudelot will once again travel to Lynchburg to present the awards. M. Pierre Hudelot is the "délégué général de la Fédération de l'Alliance Française pour les Etats-Unis" and therefore the highest ranking representative of the Federation in the United States. M. Hudelot has been very

impressed with our efforts in organizing a local essay contest and awarding our best and most deserving French students of the area with a special reception and prizes at the end of the school year. I am sure that M. Hudelot will enjoy meeting new members of our Alliance at dinner. Therefore, if you are planning to participate in the dinner (each guest will pay their own way), send an e-mail to [mngabathuler@adelphia.net](mailto:mngabathuler@adelphia.net) with your reservation.



## **VCU French Film Festival in Richmond**

**Weekend of March 30 – April 1, 2007**

I encourage all members of our Francophone communauté to check out this marvelous opportunity to see high-quality French films - that you would never see in an American theater - and meet French actors and directors at the VCU French Film Festival in Richmond. There is a wealth of information on the Internet about the history of the festival. I am quoting from the website: "Created in 1993 by Drs. Peter and Françoise Kirkpatrick, professors of French literature and culture, to gauge the true interest in the latest French film productions largely unknown to audiences in an average-sized American city, the first festival proved the existence of a demand that the American distribution companies were failing to satisfy. Until then, the public had in the best case only had access to French classics." "Since the fourth festival in 1996, the festival has invited directors and actors to Richmond, in lieu of teleconferences, to present their films and conduct question-and-answer sessions after each showing. The festival has welcomed a complete delegation of more than 160 actors, directors, producers, film scholars and critics to date."

Maybe you have been thinking about attending the festival before, but you did not want to go by yourselves. Two of our board members, Francine Baruti and Fazila di Giulio, will be available to help setting up a car pool to go to one or more days of the festival. You may check out the website and/or call VCU if you wish additional information. You may buy a pass on line which will allow you access to all the movies. Last year's prices for a pass were:

**\$95**-Regular  
**\$85**-Instructors  
**\$40**-Students

Tickets will also be sold based on availability 30 minutes before each screening. You may have to stand in line early in order to get a ticket.

**If you like to attend the festival with a group from the AF de Lynchburg, please contact Francine Baruti at [francineba2@yahoo.com](mailto:francineba2@yahoo.com) or Fazila Di Giulio at [fazila2@yahoo.com](mailto:fazila2@yahoo.com).**

### **French classes**

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> semester of Beginners' class**

Several e-mails have been sent out already concerning the start of our French classes this semester. I would like to insert here the e-mail that our teacher, Ellen Teyssier, sent out to the members of the fall classes. It is not too late to join. Simply e-mail Ellen directly. She will give you further information. Ellen wrote:



Bonjour à tous,

Meilleurs voeux pour l'année 2007! (Best wishes for 2007) I hope your holidays went well. The Alliance Française de Lynchburg is offering the continuation of the fall beginner's class at the end of January. Even if you missed a few classes towards the end of last semester, you are still invited to join us for the second semester.

**Dates (Tuesdays):**

**Jan 30**

**Feb 6, 13, 20, 27**

**Mar 6, 13, 20, 27**

**Apr 3**

**Time: 5-6pm**

**Place: VES (same location as last semester)**

**Cost: \$200**

**Conversation with Solange**

Meetings are twice a month on Thursdays at 4 p.m.

At RMWC Bookstore

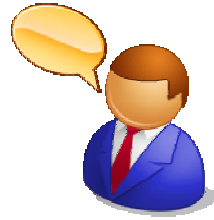
Fee: \$10.00 per session per person

**Next meeting dates:**

**Thursday, January 25,**

**February 8 and 22**

**March 8 and 22**



**French Book Club**

Nous allons continuer le bookclub français pendant le semestre du printemps. Nous avons choisi trois livres et nos rendez-vous seront les dates suivantes à 5 heures chez RMWC Bookstore.

Le 28 février	Une si longue letter	par BA M
Le 28 mars	La petite chartreuse	par Pierre Peju
Le 25 avril	Sujets libres	par Clémence Boulouque

Most members have already ordered their books and will receive them in a short while. If you still like to order books, please contact Michelle at [mngabathuler@adelphia.net](mailto:mngabathuler@adelphia.net).

**Our website is in the final stages of fine-tuning, and it is ready to be launched. I will inform you of the website's address as soon as it becomes available to me. From then on, we will post the newsletter and other important announcements and events, as well as photos of previous events, on the website. We would like to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to Francine Baruti and Yasmina Legrandjaques who have labored over the website during the past few months, and who have made it finally happen. The Alliance Française of Lynchburg will be on the web.**

### **Past events**

Our Christmas party for adults as well as the Christmas party for children were both well attended and successful. Père Noel came to visit the sixteen children, ages 1 ½ to 12 years, who attended the children's party at the home of Philippe and Susan Lavergne-Dixon. We made and ate Buche de Noel, decorated and wrote Christmas cards that I later sent to some of our senior Alliance members and board members, and sang French Christmas carols. In the name of Père Noel and the children I would like to thank all those members who donated gifts for that event. Merci!

### **Events in the future.....**

**We are planning a picnic at Sweet Briar College ....**

**....a Croquet party**

**....and another Immersion Dinner ....**

**Details in the next newsletter, coming up in April.**