

LE BISTRO DES AMIS

Funds provided by the AATF Small Grants program allowed the French Club at Massillon Washington High School (OH) to sponsor a *Bistro des Amis* during the intermission of the 2006 musical *Les Misérables*. The presentation of this play



presented a unique opportunity to raise the visibility of the French Club.

Before the *Bistro* could become a reality, we needed the approval of the Drama Department, the administration, and the School Board. We were encouraged when everyone gave their enthusiastic support.

In the original plan, French Club members planned to prepare all of the food. However, since the event was taking place on school property, we needed someone with a food license to be in compliance with Health Department Regulations. We contacted a local caterer known for his willingness to work on community projects. As we discussed possible food and decoration budgets, we decided to open the *Bistro* only for the Friday and Saturday night performances, because these were expected to



draw the largest crowds. The caterer volunteered, charging only for the actual cost of the food. With only 15-20 minutes of intermission, we decided to set up several buffet tables with *pâtisseries*, cheese platters, French bread, fruit, and mini-quiches. Food would be offered free of charge. People could serve themselves quickly. French Club students would add to the selection by baking some fill-in items, sell bottled water for \$.75/bottle to offset the cost of the food, and act as servers.

I wrote a proposal for an AATF Small Grant, explaining the project, along with the anticipated budget. Our request included

the cost of play tickets for French Club members and a small stipend for an accordionist to welcome guests with French *café* music. We decided to include the cost of 10 yards red, white, and blue fabric to create a French flag canopy that would dominate the cafeteria ceiling. Our proposal was approved by the Ohio Chapter with three conditions: (1) The play program would include historical literary information on the original text/author on which the play was based; (2) Original receipts would be sent upon completion of the project, and (3) We would present a session to an AATF audience about this project.

French Club members created posters to advertise both the play and the *bistro*. Posters were placed around the school and in the windows of local businesses. The support we received from the teaching and custodial staff was phenomenal. The Construction Trades class made wooden dowels to allow us to attach our French flag canopy to the cafeteria ceiling. The Sewing Club overlapped the fabric onto the dowels, and the Head Custodian draped the fabric into a canopy on the cafeteria ceiling. Reporters from the *Hi-Times*, our school newspaper, wrote articles publicizing the event and highlighting the involvement of the French Club. French Club members baked over 200 mini-lemon tarts and more than 1000 cream puffs to supplement items on the buffet tables.

The evening performances and the *Bistro* were a huge success. From the moment the doors opened to the public, play-goers knew that something special was happening. The community loved the entire experience, and raves were heard for days afterwards. Our principal stated that "we had forever raised the bar for the spring musical."

Undoubtedly, this project would have never occurred without the AATF Small Grant. Once again, thank you to the committee for making this wonderful event possible.

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