

NATIONAL FRENCH WEEK AT RIVIER COLLEGE

Rivier College, Nashua (NH) is a small Catholic institution, established in 1933, as an all-girl higher learning institution, founded by the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary. During the early years, those attending were from a French Canadian heritage, and all the Sisters of the Presentation were either French-Canadian or Franco-American. Needless to say, French was the language spoken on campus.

I am an alumna of Rivier. Returning from Paris after many years of international postings, I rediscovered Rivier, now a co-ed liberal arts college. Unfortunately, French has almost disappeared, not only as the spoken language on campus but also in the list of majors and graduate degrees. I am employed as the only French professor, fulfilling the need of the required language courses for graduation. How sad, that a college created with a French Canadian background, has lost its French Department. Being here for a little more than two years, my goal is to bring the French language back to Rivier, my alma mater.

As I write the description of our French program during National French Week, French events are still present on campus. Our finale is November 17, a concert with the French singer Jacques Yvart. I have lengthened the scheduled National French Week on both ends, as the dates occurred in the middle of the week.

We introduced National French Week to the Nashua community early. On October 25, in cooperation with the Nashua Symphony, a Fabulously French Concert was performed, including a French dinner prepared by the Nashua High School cooking school.

On campus, National French Week began on November 3 with the movie *Amélie*. Sunday, November 9, we had a French student Mass, where the French 1 and 2 classes participated in doing the reading and the music. Non-French-speaking students as well as faculty and parents attended it. A reception sponsored by the French Club, "Le Rendez-vous français," followed the Mass. Hot cider and *clafoutis aux pommes* were served. This turned out to be a great social event for all.

Our French lunch attracted not only French students but also our faculty and other students. Our cafeteria staff provided all the food. I set up some tables in the cafeteria with red tablecloths and put small French, Quebec, and American flags on the tables. That evening Rivier Humanities Series helped us fund our guest speaker, Dr. Brian Thompson, who spoke on André Malraux's famous quotation, "Will the 21st century be religious or not." The lecture not

only attracted the students and faculty, but also the Honorary Consul of France for New Hampshire, Mrs. Adèle Bouffard-Baker. Also present was the former chair of the French Department, Sister Marie-Jeanne Ducharme, professor emerita. The former president of the Club Richelieu of Nashua, Lee Caron, was also in the audience.

As we close National French Week on November 17 with a performance by Jacques Yvart, I hope that Rivier's administration, the Modern Language Chair, and the Rivier Community, as well as the Nashua community will begin to acknowledge the importance of their heritage and the French language. Will it reawaken their interest in the French language and culture by bringing back to Rivier College the degree program? I will continue my efforts and hope that one day soon, we can once again offer our students a major in "the most practical foreign language."

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