

CELEBRATING NATIONAL FRENCH WEEK UTICA STYLE

Here is how Utica Community Schools' (UCS) French students celebrated National French Week. Thanks to an AATF Grant, almost 500 attendees came together at a *Festival français*. Teachers whose students participated in the event came from eight different schools and included Mary Blain, RaeAnne White, Jane Kort, Marge Mandl, Janet Webster, Susan Bernardi, Anne Marie Hitzelberger, Amy Miller, and Susan Daugherty.

On Thursday evening, students enjoyed French food in the Commons and then a spectacular show of French talent in the Performing Arts Center of Henry Ford II High School. Students and teachers began to prepare for the festival early by participating in a poster contest. Entries were judged, and color copies were made to display around the community in local businesses and in school buildings. Students were awarded prizes for their outstanding poster entries. Students also prepared cultural displays which were exhibited in the cafeteria prior to the performances. The topics of the cultural displays included Provence, Versailles, *l'Afrique*, Famous French Personalities, Paris, and France, in general.

Students prepared songs, skits, dances, poetry readings, puppet shows, and musical performances to share at the festival. In between acts, we enjoyed a sing-a-long in French with an accordionist, Cass Gorkiewicz, President of the Detroit AATF Chapter. Some of the songs were "La Marseillaise," "Au clair de la lune," "Il était une bergère," "Sur le pont d'Avignon," "Ah vous dirai-je maman," and "Alouette." Over 30 posters of France and Francophone regions, t-shirts, and dictionaries were distributed to the lucky

recipients as door prizes.

Highlights of the performances included poetry recitations of "Ode à Cassandre" by Ronsard and "Déjeuner du Matin" by Jacques Prévert; a beautiful rendition on piano of Claude Debussy's "Rêverie;" a solo performance of Céline Dion's "Destin;" group interpretations of numerous songs.

Dances included group interpretations of "Ça Plane pour Moi," "La Danse de Cupidon," and a tap dance to "Paris" by Olivia Ruiz. Plays and skits included a reenactment of the famous Charles Perrault fairy tale "Peau d'Âne," a puppet show entitled "La Carte de crédit," three vignettes from *Le Petit Nicolas*, scenes enacted from the book *Un Été pas comme les autres*, and a French talk show. Students were also entertained by a wonderful guitar interpretation of "Radio Song" from Guitar Hero.

Invited guests included all UCS School Board members, UCS administrative office personnel, UCS principals, and representative officers from the Detroit AATF Chapter.

I also contacted local newspapers for press coverage. There was a nice article in one publication. Students are still talking about the event and wondering if we can do it again next year. The evening was a wonderful reminder to all of the value of learning French and how much fun speaking French can be!

Check out the many wonderful National French Week ideas on the AATF Web site [www.frenchteachers.org/nfw].
Vive le français!

Marge Mandl
[margaret.mandl@uticak12.org]



Cast of *Peau d'âne*