

PHILADELPHIA CHAPTER JOURNÉE FRANCOPHONE 2006

After a year of planning, the Philadelphia AATF Chapter held its first *Journée francophone* for high school students in November 2006. An AATF National French Week Grant helped fund this event. Other sponsors were the French Embassy in Washington, Widener University, the *Alliance française* of Philadelphia, La Crêperie Café, Travel for Teens, Prométour Educational Tours, AMSCO Publishing, Beach Lloyd Publishers, the International Club of Widener University, and the Widener chapter of Phi Beta Delta Honor Society for International Scholars. 230 students from nine different area high schools participated in the day-long event.

The day began with opening ceremonies as well as performances by the high school students. Victoria Doyle, a student at the Agnes Irwin School, performed the French and American national anthems, as well as a song by Édith Piaf. Students from William Penn Charter School enacted a condensed version of *Le Petit Prince*. Marple Newtown students contributed a skit based on a *Petit Nicholas* story. Students from Villa Maria Academy performed a song. The performances were rounded out by a choral reading of "L'homme qui te ressemble," a moving poem by René Philombe, by the students of Strathaven High School.

Following the performances, the students split into groups and rotated among three different sessions. The first was a panel discussion about study abroad followed by a study abroad fair. Students had time to speak to representatives of institutions that run programs for both high school and university students. In addition, students entered drawings for study abroad scholarships awarded at the end of the day.

The second session was lunch in the cafeteria. The food service provider worked with us to assemble a completely French menu for the day, including a spectacular dessert bar. Over lunch, students had the opportunity to converse with native speakers from our community who joined us for lunch. The organization *Philadelphie Accueil* mobilized the Francophone community to help with this portion of the day. The tables in the cafeteria were decorated with flags from Francophone countries.

Our third session included two very different activities. First, students completed an interactive activity to learn more about Francophone countries. Students from St. Joseph's Prep School prepared posters in advance to facilitate this event. Following this, students were treated to a dance lesson and performance by the African dance

troupe, Kulu Mele. This group brought high energy and amazing talent to share with the students.

At the end of the day, students gathered once more for prize drawings and to receive goodie bags and certificates to take home. Prizes included study abroad scholarships, flags, posters, mugs, books, restaurant gift certificates, and more. The goodie bags included tee-shirts, pencils, bookmarks, stickers, information about study abroad and language camps, as well as other fun stuff!

For anyone wanting to organize a similar event, here is a checklist to get you started:

1. Begin planning early! A year goes by very quickly as you prepare for an event as large as this one.

2. Establish a team and delegate various responsibilities. You will need the support of your local *Conseil exécutif*.

3. Secure a variety of sponsors (host, financial contributors, grants, prize contributors, goodie bag contributors, etc.).

4. Plan your budget carefully. Get estimates early and negotiate for group discounts if possible (e.g. tee-shirts and food).

5. Choose a location that is user-friendly. Try to minimize distance between sessions in case the weather does not cooperate.

6. Establish communication with participating schools early. Our initial r.s.v.p. date was in May.

7. Make sure students are adequately chaperoned. We asked for one adult for every ten students.

8. Practice in advance with any audio-visual equipment that will be used.

9. Enlist extra help for the day of the event.

10. Have fun! Remember to relax and enjoy the day.

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