Lt. Gov. Kathleen Blanco visits with artist Stephanie Guidry and Rhonda Lantignes in the Acadian Village Art Gallery after its opening Tuesday. The gallery features paintings from George Rodrigue and other area artists.

Art gallery opens
Rodrigue series finds home at Acadian Village

Claire Taylor Staff Writer

LAFAYETTE — A George Rodrigue painting in the new Acadian Village Art Gallery showed a pummel Cajun school boy sitting on a stool, a sign hanging on the classroom wall proclaiming, “The French in the South.”

Like many Louisiana natives, L.C. Davis, curator director of Lafayette Association for the Blind Museum, can identify with the scene. When he was in school, only five out of 40 students spoke English. The others were punished every day for speaking their native French, he said.

The painting, titled “The Best You — A Real No,” is among 17 Rodrigue paintings on permanent display at the Acadian Village Art Gallery. The gallery, renovated with the help of a grant, was officially dedicated Tuesday. Among those attending the dedication were Lt. Gov. Kathleen Blanco, Rodrigue state Reps. Amy Lake LaFemina and Mike Liteky, and City-Parish President Walter Mower. Rodrigue was hired by Gerald and Betty Dufour to paint the series depicting the Acadian saga and scale between 1814 and the 1890s. The Dufours donated the paintings to LARC, which is supported in part by proceeds from Acadian Village. The series begin with the French settling in Louisiana, their involvement in the Grand Coteau Church, the deportation from Canada and settlement in Louisiana.

“The pictures tell the story of what we’re all about,” Dufour said.

Three of Rodrigue’s Blue Dog prints also hang in the gallery to help visitors recognize the Louisiana-based artist, known as Blue Dog creator also painted the series on Acadian scale series, said Bob Moore, director of Acadian Village.

One room of the gallery is dedicated to Acadian Village Artworks, a place for local artists to display their creations. Another room will house traveling art exhibits. The first, which will remain through September,