CODOFIL celebrates 25 years

By Gina Howard
Staff Writer

Louisiana residents of French ancestry are taking more pride in their past, thanks to the efforts of CODOFIL.

“They (people of Louisiana French heritage) were thought of as second class citizens,” said Dr. May Waggoner, a member of the Foundation CODOFIL board of directors and a USL professor. “People are all of a sudden proud of being French.”

Waggoner said CODOFIL, the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana, has played a major role in the change of attitude.

“Twenty-five years ago, people did not speak French. Now we have street signs in French, French is taught in the schools and the music is popular,” she said.

The foundation CODOFIL will celebrate 25 years of service with a Silver Anniversary Gala on Friday, Sept. 17 at the Hotel Academic.

The evening will start at 5:30 with a French mass at St. John Cathedral. The banquet will begin at the hotel at 7 p.m. Entertainment will be provided by Les Freres Michot and those who have provided outstanding service to CODOFIL will be recognized.

The honored guest at the gala will be Jean-Pierre Saintonge, president of Quebec and president of the International Assembly of French Speaking Parliaments.

CODOFIL was first formed in 1968 by Louisiana citizens who were afraid the Louisiana French culture was dying out. The Legislature passed Act 409 which established CODOFIL.

Since then, CODOFIL has sponsored many programs to protect and promote the French heritage of Louisiana, such as teaching French in elementary schools, student and teacher exchanges, the organization of national and international meetings, festivals and bilingual publications.

Although CODOFIL is involved in all of these programs, the priority of the organization is teaching French at the elementary level. The program debuted with the arrival of 12 teachers from France who were to bring the French language back to Louisiana.

CODOFIL continues to work in close collaboration with the Louisiana State Department of Education, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, local school boards and state university boards.

Tickets for the anniversary gala are $50 per person or $500 for a table of eight. The table package includes a reserved table, eight tickets, a special poster and special recognition.

For more information, call Durand LeBlanc at 262-5983.

In January 1984, Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac, second from left, receives a gift from Gov. Edwin Edwards during a visit to the French capital. James Domengeaux, far left, founder of CODOFIL in Louisiana, was in the group. Also shown are J. Bennett Johnston and Sammy Nunez. Chirac stressed the importance of the ties uniting France and Louisiana.