Twenty-five years ago, not many people in Louisiana were proud to say they had French heritage, but one organization has made a difference.

"They were thought of as second-class citizens," said Dr. May Waggoner, a member of the Foundation CODOFIL board of directors. "People are all of the sudden proud of being French."

Waggoner said CODOFIL, the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana, has been responsible for the change in 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."

Waggoner

where French-speaking people feel comfortable.

But the benefits go beyond economics, she said.

"Because of this, Americans are aware of what the French mean to them and the French are aware of the Americans," Waggoner said.

In celebration of its birthday, Foundation CODOFIL is hosting a 25th anniversary dinner party Sept. 17 at the Hotel Acadiana in Lafayette.

The evening will start with a French mass at 5:30 p.m. at St. John Cathedral. Dinner will begin at 7 p.m. at the hotel and will include entertainment by Les Freres Michot, a local Cajun band, and recognition of those who have contributed to the cause of the French Language in Louisiana.

In addition, the event is also a fund-raiser for the foundation. Waggoner said money from the event will go to CODOFIL's educational programs, such as scholarships.

Tickets for the celebration are $50 each, or $500 for a table of 10. For more information, call Durand LeBlanc at 262-5983.

This picture, taken in March 31, 1982, shows Louisiana Gov. David Treen presiding over the official opening ceremony of the new CODOFIL headquarters in the old city hall on West Main Street.