Bienvenue au Carencro
City rolls out the boudin for its Belgian twin

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CARENCRO — They were cutting a rug on Church Street Sunday as Carencro rolled out the Cajun carpet for its sister city of Leuze, Belgium.

The fête was so festive that delegations from Lafayette (and its sister city of Namur, Belgium) and Kaplan also joined in to drink, dance and dine on red beans and rice, jambalaya and cracklins.

“Everyone has volunteered their time and talent to welcome our Belgian guests and we want them to know how much it means to us to be their host. It’s been a blast.”

The Belgians are part of a visiting delegation from 28 Belgian cities and towns with sister cities in Louisiana.

“Not only is our sister city here, but the other 27 sister cities are on hand for this, the year of FrancoFête and Congrès Mondial,” he said. “We have citizens who, had it not been for these kinds of exchanges, would never have visited Europe. And, unlike a structured tour, it’s nice to travel there when you know people and they can show the real treasures of the area. We do the same for them when they come here.”

Michel Baton is the mayor (bourgmestre) of Leuze, population 13,000, a two-hour drive from Paris and a one-hour drive from Brussels. He has been to Louisiana a half-dozen times, but he said each visit is a totally new adventure.

“I love America. I love Louisiana,” Baton said. “I am even more happy to be here as part of FrancoFête, the celebration of all of our cousins. And to prove the common thread, I speak English to you and you speak French to me.”

Interestingly, Baton said that, during the current visit, hardly anyone in Acadiana has asked him to comment on the on-going conflict in the neighboring former Republic of Yugoslavia.

“War is for tomorrow,” Baton said. “Today is to celebrate good times and good friends.”

Guitarist Kenneth Wyatt strums in the street Sunday during a block party held in Carencro to welcome sister city, Leuze, Belgium. Sister city delegations from Lafayette and Kaplan also traveled to Carencro for the street dance.