Film to show Cajun resilience

Cajun musician, professors look for film funding

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LAFAYETTE — Few members of the Rotary Club of Lafayette understood Cajun music and national Zachary Richard's opening question to them Thursday afternoon.

Speaking in French, the award-winning singer sang a song but few members spoke French.

Richard said the group's purpose was to illustrate one of the reasons behind his efforts with UL professors Barry Ansel and Cary Brassacq, over the past year to create a documentary about the Cajun culture.

"The heartbeat of our culture is the language," Richard said. "If we lose it, we will lose a part of our heritage."

Richard and Ansel, head of UL's Modern Language Department and director of the Acadian and Creole Folklife Center, spoke to the Rotarians Thursday about what they hope to accomplish with the documentary.

Richard said the documentary is to describe the Cajun culture, that would be adaptable.

Ansel said the film is in what is now known as Nova Scotia, called by the British. During the forced deportation, thousands were sent to English colonies along the Atlantic southeast. Others settled in Louisiana.

Zachary Richard, along with partner Barry Ansel in the background, gives their pitch to the Rotary Club Thursday for funding a film on the Acadians.

And because attempts to break up the Cajun society and culture failed, and the language continues, Richard said, "the culture"

"It's time we said that story," Richard said. "It's time we told our story," he said.

Richard said he hopes to raise between $300,000 and $400,000 to complete the documentary, which should take at least three years if everything goes according to plan.

Ansel said the documentary will show Cajun culture, that would be adaptable.

"All we have to do is tell the story as it happened," Ansel said. "It does not have to be film."

Zachary Richard considered the documentary will not portray Cajuns as victims. Instead, he said it will show the "achievements and resilience" of the Cajun community and positive aspects of the culture.