The Cajundome

Inside the $65 million facility called the Cajundome, more than is widely known, including concerts, wedding receptions, graduations, and sporting events.

Multi-million dollar facility benefits USL community

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The Cajundome stretches across Lafayette’s horizon and every day USL students pass by on the way to school, unaware of what goes on inside.

But did you know? It cost $65 million to build, most of which was state funded? With 40,000 square feet in the arena it can seat up to 13,500 people. The Cajundome has an annual budget of $1.6 million? USL receives 22 days a year free-of-charge to use the Cajundome?

The Cajundome doors opened for the first time on Nov. 10, 1985, and a day later country singer Kenny Rogers performed to a sold-out stadium of almost 13,000 people. Over the past six years performers such as ZZ Top, Michael Bolton, George Strait, Garth Brooks, Eddie Murphy, George Burns and Bon Jovi have entertained Lafayette audiences.

Events Coordinator Glenn Harrington said the biggest draw was Mother Theresa’s visit, with a little over 13,100 people attending her speech. Other shows to visit Cajundome include the Monster Car show, PBS’ Sesame Street, the Ice Capades, the American Gladiators and the Harlem Globetrotters.

Concerts and special events make up only a portion of events at the Cajundome. The stage comes down and the hard court rolls out during USL’s basketball season. USL usually hosts from 15 to 18 games at the arena. Attendance at a basketball game this season averaged between 4,500 to 5,000.

"USL has first rights during basketball season. We schedule events as a second tentative until we get USL’s basketball schedule. So we hold just about everything for them," Harrington said.

USL-sponsored events also include commencement exercises, Ragin’ Roar and Lagniappe Festival.

Through an agreement between the City of Lafayette and USL, the city council subsidizes Cajundome operations with up to $500,000. In the past three years the council has reduced that. According to Assistant Director Greg Davis they rarely use the entire amount. Last year they only used $225,000.

The City Council recently passed a proposal establishing a special fund for reinvestment in the Cajundome. The money for the fund will come from the reduction of the subsidy.

The Cajundome’s annual budget of $1.6 million supports its personnel, maintenance of the building and event operations. When an event uses the facility the Cajundome provides staff and security. The building rents for $2,500 per day, plus 12 percent of gross ticket sales for concerts.

Besides the large arena, a smaller room is available for wedding receptions, organization meetings and small events. The Cajundome also provides catering from its kitchen, run by Broussard Catering. A first aid office is equipped to handle minor accidents and emergencies.