Youngsters from France visiting SM families

By Martha Aycock

Eight French teenagers are having the time of their lives, junketing around Southwest Louisiana (and even as far as Astroworld in Houston) learning about the Acadian lifestyle from the St. Martinville families they are living with.

The teens, from several different provinces in France, include Fabienne Alais and Sylvie Maiaux, guests of Mr. and Mrs. Willis Talley; Hugues Coffy, guest of Mr. and Mrs. Errol Greig; Martine Kieffer, guest of Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Delaune; Martin de Vauxmoret Thibault, guest of the Russell Thibodeaux family; Marie Daniele Paumier and Sophie Roussin, guest of Linda Chatman; and Christine Banleu, guest of Mrs. Elaine Johnson.

The French teens’ trip is part of the North Atlantic Cultural Exchange League’s program to offer an exciting and enriching experience to American families. It gives them the opportunity to share their home with a French high school student for four weeks in the summer.

Several of the host families have spent time in France and were so impressed with the hospitality there, they were eager to reciprocate.

Thus far, the youngsters report, they’ve enjoyed “everything.” That “everything” may include a trip to Astroworld in Houston—said one young lady, “We don’t have anything at all like that in France”—to shopping in the malls in Lafayette, taking weekend trips to Grand Isle and other scenic areas and just goofing off.

One teenager, at least, has had time to discover the difference between American teens and those of her own culture. “It seems that here, young people become adults sooner than we do. . . . maybe because they are allowed to drive so young. In France you must be 18 to get a license. I suppose if a teenager’s mind is ready for it, growing up so fast is alright. . . . but I’m not sure about it,” she commented.

Another difference is that in France there are few fast-food establishments. “We eat fresh food that we have to start cooking from the beginning, fresh eggs, vegetables . . . and we eat only at the table, never in front of the television.” And yet the lifestyle here is appealing to them for many have learned to love rice and gravy and crawfish and even frog legs, and movies like “The Empire Strikes Back”.

On Aug. 14, the students will return to France, loaded down with gifts for their parents and friends and, most likely blue jeans (“Did you know that in France jeans cost $45 or $50?” one young shopper exclaimed) but also embued with some understanding of what this part of the world is like—-a view garnered from inside, as part of a family unit.
Seven of the eight French students visiting in the St. Martinville area are shown with their host families Friday morning in front of the St. Martin de Tours rectory. Students include Fabienne Alais, Hugues Coffy, Martine Kieffer, Sylvie Maiaux, Martin de Vauxmoret Thibault, Marie Daniele Paumier and Sophie Roussin. Host families include Mr. and Mrs. Willis Talley, Mr. and Mrs. Errol Greig, Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Delaune, Mr. and Mrs. Russell Thibodeaux and Linda Chatman. Not pictured is student Christine Banlen and her host Elaine Johnson. (Staff Photo)