

YOUR VIEW

French center at UMD
still going strong

As I begin my 11th year as director of the Boivin Center of French Language and Culture at UMass Dartmouth, I have a great deal of pride and satisfaction in what the center has accomplished over the past 25 years.

The then Southeastern Massachusetts University established the Omer E. and Laurette M. Boivin Center for French Language and Culture with a \$100,000 endowment from the 95-year-old Fall River doctor on April 11, 1985. I was there that glorious day with a gathering of my university colleagues, French dignitaries, representatives from numerous French organizations, and many school officials from the region.

Dr. Boivin had been the chief of urology at St. Anne's Hospital until he reached the age of 70, and was educated in French in Canada. He wanted to bring the French language and culture to the fore in Southeastern Massachusetts. He also wanted to show that French was the *lingua franca* in the world alongside English in the arts, business, technology, hospitality, medicine and diplomacy, and he focused on SMU to do just that. *Après tout* (after all), he was born to French-Canadian parents, and had lived in Fall River all his life. For me, a lifelong friend of the Boivins, the moment was a dream come true.

Over the years, we have given many scholarships for needy students studying French in the States, in France or in Quebec. We have interviewed Franco-Americans in our region to document the positive impact these hard-working and industrious individuals have had on this region in the 20th and 21st centuries. In addition, we offer a certificate program in international marketing and French.

Our very popular cultural program has been highlighted by such outstanding luminaries as Quebec writers Marie-Claire Blais, Helene Dorion, Nicole Brossard, Alice Parizeau, Gaetan Brulotte, Louis Caron, Roch Carrier, Marie Cardinal, Richard Hetu and Jean-Francois

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Soumain; Quebec Prime Minister Jacques Parizeau; Francophile writers Art Buchwald, Adam Gopnik, David Plante, Francine du Plessix Gray, Polly Platt and Richard Wilbur; Ambassador Pierre de Boisdeffre; French authors Jacques Borel, Henri Peyre, Emmanuel Dongala, David Plante, Frederique Hebrard and Louis Velle; Francophone scholars Prof. William Carter, Prof. Pierre Capretz, Prof. Nelson Brooks and Prof. John Rassias; French Academician Florence Delay; French mime Marcel Marceau; French *cordons bleu* Julia Child; *chanteurs and chanteuses* (singers) Serge Kerval, Maxime Leforestier, Claudia Hommel, Annie Royer, Lucie Therrien and Josee Vachon; language advocates Lois Pines and Sen. Paul Simon, and Francophile movie producers Lisa Goessels and Fredrick Wiseman.

This fall semester brings three excellent speakers to campus, including the celebrated poet, novelist and translator David Slavitt on Sept. 27, the acclaimed speaker/scholar on France and the Holocaust and tolerance, Ruth Hartz, on Oct. 25, and the distinguished francophile educator and *cordons bleu* Margo Moore on Dec. 6. (All programs will take place in the browsing area of the Claire T. Carney Library at 4:30 p.m., and everyone is welcome to attend.)

Already in place are plans for collaboration with other centers so we can bring our message to many other members of the university and community. Succinctly, the Boivin Center continues to grow and meet new and even greater challenges.

My hope for the next 25 years is to strengthen our center with new and increased membership, and enhance awareness of the global impact of France, Quebec and other francophone countries in our present-day society.