

## French Ambassador Honors Congressional French Caucus

Standing high atop the staircase of the residence of French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte, a young and vibrant Marquis de Lafayette addressed Members of Congress and other guests at a March 7 reception in honor of the Congressional French Caucus. The Marquis expressed his esteem for the trans-Atlantic relationship he fought to develop: "Think of this place as your new home and of me as your new friend. [...] From now on I shall have two countries, France and the United States of America," he proclaimed.

As symbols that epitomizes French-American friendship, the French Caucus reception and the spirit of French-American relations symbolically conveyed by the re-enactor's address could not have been more timely. On February 15, Congressman Ike Skelton (D-MO), Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee and a French Caucus member, introduced a resolution, H.Res. 171, honoring the life of Lafayette and encouraging American military personnel to continue to study the critical role he played in the formation of the United States and the American military.

"Lafayette occupies a considerable place in the history of the United States," declares Congressman Skelton in his resolution. "More than one person, he symbolizes the assistance American colonists received from Europe in the struggle for independence from Great Britain."

Congressman Skelton recalls in his resolution that a number of cities and towns across the United States have demonstrated their esteem for the man by adopting his namesake. In Indiana, for example, there is Lafayette, West Lafayette, Fayette, and Fayette Country. A life-size portrait of Lafayette also hangs in the U.S. House of Representatives.

In 2002, Senator John Warner (R-VA), a proud member of the French

Caucus and former Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, conferred honorary citizenship upon the revolutionary figure. It was an honor well-appreciated by the young Marquis who proclaimed with passionate emphasis before Members of Congress and other guests his best wishes to both of his home countries: "God Bless the USA," he declared.



Rep. Oberstar (left), Rep. Boozman (center),  
 Amb. Levitte (right)

"And Vive La France."

"Tonight I would like to focus on a man who played a fundamental role in establishing and shaping this unique relationship between the United States and France," Levitte told members of the Caucus. "This relationship has had its ups and downs, but the fundamental strength of the special bond between our two countries has never been in question." Distinguished guests at the March 7 reception included: French Caucus Co-Chairs, Rep. John Boozman (R-AR) and Rep. Jim

Oberstar (D-MN), as well as caucus members, Senator David Vitter (R-LA) and Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (R-RI).

Addressing members of the audience in the "language of the Marquis de Lafayette," Rep. Oberstar paid tribute in both flawless French and English to the extraordinary accomplishments of the young military officer and his contributions to Franco-American relations. Congressman Oberstar characterized the relationship as one in which each nation must continue to "speak frankly, without hiding anything, continue to listen, to understand, and to get along. [...] It is a great partnership that must be continued, and which is important for the stability and security of the entire world."

## French Minister of Culture Visits the U.S.

French Minister of Culture and Communication Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres traveled to the United States March 1-4 to visit New Orleans and New York City. Accompanied by French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte, Minister Donnedieu de Vabres kicked off his four-day tour in New Orleans, where he paid homage to the victims of Hurricane Katrina. This marked his second visit to New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina, taking place within the context of several ambitious cultural cooperation initiatives that have developed between France and Louisiana over the past year.

Faithful to the strong historic ties which link France to the state of Louisiana, Minister Donnedieu de Vabres spent his time in New Orleans inaugurating exhibits which celebrate the strong French heritage in the city (see page 7.) Following his trip to New Orleans, Minister Donnedieu de Vabres continued his tour of the U.S. in New York City on March 3. He first met with a delegation of French and American artists and filmmakers for the 12th annual "Rendez-Vous with French Cinema," a French film festival that took place in NYC from February 28 to March 11. The French Minister then inaugurated "Jean-Michel Basquiat, French Collections," an exhibition that features 41 works from the Brooklyn-born artist that were purchased by French collectors. Many of the exhibit's paintings are on display in the U.S. for the first time. Later that evening, Minister Donnedieu de Vabres and French movie director Agnès Varda met with leaders of the Jewish community at the French Consulate of NYC for



Minister Donnedieu de Vabres addresses  
 guests in New Orleans

the screening of Ms. Varda's recent movie on the Righteous of France (see NFF-07.02,) which will eventually be part of an exhibition in the United States.

The French Minister concluded his visit to the United States on March 4 at the French Consulate, where he conferred the rank of Officer in the *Légion d'Honneur* upon Philippe de Montebello, the French-born director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Montebello's leadership has allowed the museum to nearly double in size over the past 20 years. The Minister praised the "farsighted leadership" and "vigilant sense of stewardship" of Montebello, whom he described as one of the "most eminent cultural figures" of New York City. "We celebrate your accomplishments as one of the museum world's most influential spokespersons and especially highlight on this occasion your immeasurable contribution to French-American cultural relations," Minister Donnedieu de Vabres proclaimed during the ceremony.

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### SHIMON PERES RELEASES BIOGRAPHY

Israeli Vice Prime Minister, Shimon Peres chose the French Consulate in New York for the U.S. launch of his biography on February 26. American and Israeli dignitaries, diplomats and media representatives were present at the event to celebrate Peres's achievements. Michael Bar-Zohar, the author of Peres's biography, stated: "Shimon Peres's achievements, his personality and his stubborn quest for peace have carried him far beyond Israel's borders. He is considered today one of the world's great statesmen. "One of Peres's many accomplishments includes sharing the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994 with Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin for their efforts to promote peace in the Middle East. In light of this honor, Peres referenced French President Charles de Gaulle by joking that he is only as great as his quarrels and history will remember him for his arguments, not his prestigious prizes. He continued by praising the long relationship between Israel and France: "we had a golden age, then a relationship with some controversy, and I can say that France really helped Israel to survive the most difficult times of our existence."

### FRANCE AND U.K. JOINTLY PRODUCE AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

Working from September through early December, the offices of MO-PA2, a newly formed company tasked with ship design, meticulously detailed the plans for France's second full-deck aircraft carrier, the PA2. Scheduled to be completed between 2013 and 2015, particulars as minuscule as the size of bunk beds were not overlooked as the

French and British shipbuilding team worked in cooperation to design (and eventually construct) three aircraft carriers, two of which will join the British Royal Navy. The third one will be fitted with catapults and arresting gears and will join the French Navy. "It may sound absurd to go into such details at this stage...but we are talking about the environment for 1,720 people spending up to seven months at sea," explained the director of MO-PA2, Alex Fabarez. In addition to playing a vital role in consolidating Europe's naval industry, the PA2 is also expected to stand in for France's currently active aircraft carrier, the Charles de Gaulle, which is scheduled to come into port for maintenance in 2015.

## Former French President Visits the U.S.

Former President of France Valéry Giscard d'Estaing visited New York and Washington, D.C. from February 28 through March 2. During his three-day visit in the nation's capital, the former French President met with prominent U.S. officials, including: President Bush, former Secretary of State Colin Powell, Senator John Warner and Senator Chuck Hagel. He also met with members of Washington think tanks and media representatives.

The former French President delivered a lecture at Georgetown University (GU) on March 1 at the invitation of Dean Robert L. Gallucci and the BMW Center of German and European studies at GU, one of three "Centers of Excellence" in North America devoted to the interdisciplinary study of Europe. Mr. Giscard d'Estaing addressed the audience on the subject of Euro-American relations in the 21st century, a relationship he characterized as a "very important and vital issue of the diplomacy of tomorrow."

"In the past 50 years, relations between the United States and the countries of Europe have kept a bilateral character, or multi-lateral through NATO. American leaders when they have expressed views have continued to consider Europe a constellation of States vaguely linked among themselves through an opaque organization. They have given scant importance to the annual EU-American summits that have lacked decision-making power, and



Valéry Giscard d'Estaing speaks at Georgetown

© Embassy of France/ Alicia Kenworthy

where their president, your president, has met with an interlocutor whom he never saw again because of the rotating EU presidency," said Mr. Giscard d'Estaing. The former French president pleaded for a "partnership of values." He defined the Euro-American relationship as "based on the same values that have emerged from a common civilization," noting that "Europe and the US have a whole raft of shared, deeply ingrained values, which means that they never will and can't be adversaries." To be successful, he explained, this partnership should prevent "each party [from] interfering in the other's affairs, especially bringing bilateral pressure to bear in the other's sphere, while trying to divide its partner," noting that "in particular, the EU's eventual enlargement to new members is a strictly European matter." This partnership, representing 60% of the GNP, he added, should also be respectful of the others: "The Euro-Atlantic partnership of values will have to ensure that it does not antagonize other cultures and other values (...) to prevent any perception of isolation or frustration."

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing was President of France from 1974-1981 and is a member of the "Constitutional Council" in his capacity of former President of France. He has always been highly involved with European issues and presided over the Convention on the Future of Europe that wrote and negotiated the European constitution.

## Conference of the Heads of State of Africa and France

French President Jacques Chirac presided over the 24th Franco-African summit in Cannes, France, on February 16. The *Conference of the Heads of State of Africa and France* addressed France's further involvement in and support of Africa, while commemorating the membership of 18 additional African countries to the organization UNITAID.

Leaders of 30 African states were present at the ceremony, in addition to other high level officials, including Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, and Yoshiro Mori, former Prime Minister of Japan. The Summit reflects France's numerous initiatives for the continent, among which are the redeployment of French peacekeeping missions in Africa and increased aid distribution efforts. "I am delighted that our Summit is coming to a close with 18 African countries joining UNITAID. (...) Their participation in this project demonstrates their conviction that both national and international solidarity are the way forward to combat these pandemics. They are sending a message of hope to their peoples and to the world," announced President Chirac.

France's partnership with the new African members of UNITAID promises to increasingly facilitate progress toward the fight against three of the most virulent pandemics: AIDS, malaria and

tuberculosis. According to President Chirac, UNITAID expects to raise 300 million euros to benefit health initiatives in 50 countries in 2007. The organization is a modern financing mechanism that is built on continual, sustainable, multiyear contributions, which are allocated to the development of health systems and the reduction of drug costs. The combination of national and international cooperation promises to help save millions of lives for decades to come. For more information, please visit: [www.ambafrance-us.org](http://www.ambafrance-us.org).



President Chirac speaks at Franco-African summit

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## French Astronaut to Install European Space Module

Jean-Jacques Dordain, Director-General of the European Space Agency (ESA) announced February 13 that French astronaut Léopold Eyharts will travel to the International Space Station (ISS) to install and commission Europe's Columbus, a \$1.55 billion science space module and Europe's biggest contribution to the ISS. Eyharts will be part of the Expedition 16 crew that includes German astronaut Hans Schlegel. The 49-year-old astronaut will travel on the American shuttle *Discovery* this October to the ISS, where he will remain for approximately two months in order

to set up the Columbus module/laboratory in a series of two space walks. Eyharts' journey into space will be his second, following a three-week stint aboard Mir, the former Russian orbital station, nine years ago where he performed experiments in medical research, neuroscience, biology, fluid physics, and technology. He is also the first Frenchman to travel into space since Philippe Perrin in June 2002. The installation of Columbus will permit scientists to conduct experiments in biology, physiology, material sciences, and fluid sciences.

## U.S. Delegation Travels to France to Discuss Counterfeit Products

French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte recently invited an American delegation to France to meet with French leaders to discuss the unified interest of both countries in the fight against



counterfeiting and piracy. France and the United States are world leaders in promoting awareness and adherence to Intellectual Property (IP) rights standards, and today's challenges require an increasingly effective and collaborative approach to combat product imitation. The tour provided the delegation with an opportunity to examine IP rights concerns from a variety of perspectives. Members of the delegation included Marybeth Peters, Director of the Copyright Office, Judith Saffer, President of the American Intellectual Property Law Association, Brad Huter, President of the International Intellectual Property Institute, in addition to journalists from *Vogue*, *Business Week*, and *Harpers' Bazaar*, among others.

In addition to meeting with French government officials

Copé, Lagarde, and Loos, who have been very active in managing efforts on this issue, the tour engaged the delegates in dialogue with business representatives from French fashion houses. Because of innovation, adequate protection and cooperation within the industry, demonstrated by its trade association, the *Union des Fabricants*, French fashion has prospered despite the obstacles of globalization. After a special visit of top designer showrooms, representatives from Hermès, Louis Vuitton, Dior, and the *Fédération de la Couture*, among others, discussed the technical and legal aspects of protecting their creations with the delegation.

The tour then continued to Marseille, the southern French port city that has earned a reputation for its resistance to IP rights infringement. The delegation met with customs officials who discussed the customs framework inside a storage house (photo above) and the fight against counterfeiting on a daily basis—in particular, how officials target, identify and destroy the counterfeits. In Cannes, the delegation met with Bernard Brochand, deputy mayor of the city, and President of the Anti-Counterfeiting National Committee (CNAC), who outlined the new Committee's 2007 awareness campaign. Before returning to Washington, the delegates were treated to a taste of "Fashion Week in Paris" at the *Carrousel du Louvre*.

## President Chirac Confers the Legion of Honor Upon Clint Eastwood

Oscar-winning actor and director, Clint Eastwood, was awarded the *Légion d'Honneur* on February 17 at the Elysée Palace in Paris.

Eastwood was venerated by French President Jacques Chirac: "From this side of the Atlantic...You embody the best of Hollywood. In France, your films move millions of viewers because they are strong without being simplistic, lucid without being cynical." He continued by articulating that Eastwood's latest films were "a good lesson in humanity."

In President Chirac's opinion, Eastwood serves as a quintessential "ambassador to France," by making films that give France a chance "to understand the complexity of America, with all of its grandeur and fragilities, with its spirit of its dreams, and with its



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anxious questions." President Chirac concluded his comments by wishing success for "Letters from Iwo Jima," Eastwood's new film, which was released a week after the reception. "Letters from Iwo Jima" presented the point of view of the Japanese soldiers involved in the Battle of Iwo Jima, a foil to the film "Flags of Our Fathers," which was released last year.

Popular in France for his role in "Dirty Harry," Eastwood presided on the jury at the Cannes Film Festival in 1994, and in 1998 was awarded an honorary César, the French equivalent to an Oscar. France's most esteemed order, the *Légion d'Honneur*, was first awarded by Napoleon in 1804, and is composed of five classes; Eastwood received the rank of *Chevalier*, or Knight.

## Celebration of International Women's Day at French Embassy

In 2001, the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) became the first French public research organization to implement and coordinate actions designed to improve the role of women in science by creating its Mission for the Place of Women, directed by Geneviève Hatet-Najar ([www.cnrs.fr/mission-femmes](http://www.cnrs.fr/mission-femmes)).

The CNRS Office in Washington and the Mission co-organized "Physique de femmes (Women in Physics)," an original exhibition that explores the career paths of 15 women physicists (presented at the Maison Française of Embassy of France in Washington, D.C. from March 5-30).

"Crosscutting Views on the Status of Women in Science," a roundtable discussion on the subject of the promotion of women in the sciences, also took place on March 6 at the Embassy of France. French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte inaugurated the celebration. Physicists and other experts

in the audience exchanged ideas on the complexities of being a woman in science and engineering.

The distinguished experts included: Nina Byers, Professor Emeritus of Physics at UCLA; Catherine Didion, Senior Program Officer for Diversity at the National Academy of Engineering; Alice Hogan, ADVANCE Program Director at the National Science Foundation; Shirley Malcolm, Head of Education and Human Resources at the American Association for the Advancement of Science; Anne Pépin, Physicist and Scientific Assistant at CNRS; Marc Sher, Professor of Physics at the College of William and Mary; and Patrick Bernier, Physicist and Director of the CNRS Office for the USA and Canada. For more information please visit: [www.drei.cnrs.fr/rub3/Ameriques/washington](http://www.drei.cnrs.fr/rub3/Ameriques/washington).



A group of students from Lycée Rochambeau visits the exhibition

### SCHOLARSHIPS TO FRANCE

Each year, France offers one to two week all expenses paid language and cultural excursions in France to approximately 40 young Americans ranging from the age of 18 to 25. Accommodations, meals, and activities are provided, although participants are responsible for their own travel to and from France. Most trips take place between June 20 and September 10. Anyone with a good knowledge of French and an interest in French language and culture can apply through the Web site: [http://frenchculture.org/a\\_youth-international-meetings\\_739.cfm](http://frenchculture.org/a_youth-international-meetings_739.cfm). All applications must be completed by April 1, 2007.

### IN THE SPIRIT OF GIVING

February proved to be a month of celebration in the name of charity, as multiple organizations sponsored fundraisers dedicated toward promoting Franco-American understanding and the beauties of the Francophone world. Celebrating the beauty of Tahitian music, dance, and culture, the Highland Club Hollywood hosted a traditional Polynesian Party and Big Show on February 22, with the objective of raising funds for "The International Us, Children Charity." Floral leis, colorful music, and talented dancers transported guests to Tahiti for an enjoyable philanthropic evening. In celebration of the 225th Anniversary of the victory at the battle of Yorktown, the *Alliance Française* of Northwestern Connecticut has decided to host a fundraiser by selling stoneware bowls, a classic symbol of the long-standing French-American friendship. The wide-rimmed bowls are stamped with motifs of American and French Revolutionary War uniform buttons. Profits from the bowls are being used to promote the study of French language and culture, and to educate the public about Franco-American relations. For more information, please contact: [www.afnwct.org](http://www.afnwct.org).

### LSU NUIT BLANCHE SUCCESS AGAIN

The second annual *Nuit Blanche* (Sleepless Night), a twelve-hour nocturnal celebration of cinema at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, was held on February 2. The new tradition commenced at six in the evening and guests filtered out at six the next morning, proclaiming the event a success.

Films were shown in French with English subtitles and featured depictions of French culture in either a dramatic or comedic fashion. A selection of four films was presented, followed by a debate-discussion. "Les Visiteurs (The Visitors)," "L'Auberge espagnole (The Spanish Apartment)," "Joyeux Noël (Merry Christmas)," and "A bout de souffle (Breathless)," the four films selected for the event, allowed audiences to discover the wonders of French cinema. The evening began with an *apéritif* followed by a buffet of French wines, cheeses, pastries, and baguettes. French breakfast concluded the night of celebration.

# France Celebrates 32nd César Ceremony

The stars shone brightly last month as moviegoers and cinephiles alike were treated to a weekend of trans-Atlantic award ceremonies, during which both France and the United States honored achievements in the cinematic community. Just as France concluded the February 24 César ceremony, their counterparts across the Atlantic began walking the red carpet at the American Academy Awards, which took place the following day in Los Angeles.

The best and brightest of France's cinematic community arrived in Paris Saturday evening at the *Théâtre Musical de Paris Châtelet* to attend the highly anticipated 32nd annual *César Académie des Arts et Techniques du Cinéma*. In attendance were some of France's most beloved film stars, including François Cluzet and Juliette Binoche, in addition to American actress Hilary Swank, British actor Jude Law and internationally renowned Spanish director Pedro Almodovar, producer of last year's hit "*Volver*." This year's award ceremony was hosted by French singer, actress and director Valérie Lemercier (recognized by many Americans for her role in the comedy "*The Visitors*") and was broadcast live in the U.S. by international news station TV5Monde.

Like the American Academy Awards, the Césars recognize the best films, actors, actresses, and directors of the year. One of the biggest winners of the night was Pascale Ferran's "*Lady Chatterley*," the screen adaptation of D.H. Lawrence's passionate tale of an aristocratic British woman's affair with her groundskeeper. The film took home a total of five awards



Valérie Lemercier hosted the ceremony

later revealing she is still alive. The film received four awards, including Best Actor, which went to François Cluzet, Best Musical Composition Written for a Film, Best Editing, and Best Director, which went to Guillaume Canet, who, at the age of 33, is the youngest director to have ever received a César.

Philippe Lioret's "*Je vais bien, ne t'en fais pas*" also enjoyed success at the ceremony. The film tells the heart-wrenching tale of a 19-year-old girl's quest to find her twin brother who ran away from home after a fight with his parents. Kad Merad won Best Supporting Actor for his performance in the film and Mélanie Laurent won Most Promising Actress.

## History of the César Awards

Prior to the establishment of the Césars, no cinematic equivalent to the American Oscars existed in France. There was the *Grand prix du Cinéma Français* which was awarded to one film each year from 1934 to 1986 and the *Victoires du Cinéma Français* which lasted a decade in the 1950s. Neither the *Grand Prix* nor the *Victoires* could capture the scope or the glamour of the internationally recognized Academy Awards. As a result, in 1975, Georges Cravenne, a French film producer, created *Les Césars Académie des Arts et Techniques du Cinéma* as a French equivalent to the American Oscars.

Cravenne explained his motivations for creating the Césars: "The idea of creating a French equivalent germinated in my mind until one day the name of my friend César, a brilliant sculptor [César Baldaccini], and his statuette with him, came to me. Oscar, "César," five letters (oh!) that rhymed to such a degree that the birth of the second became evident, for the greater good of the promotion of cinema, and Europe in any case."

In the beginning, only 13 Césars were awarded to members of the film industry. Today there are 20 Césars awarded in late February or early March in Paris. Every year, over 3,400 artists and professionals form the *Académie*, whose mission it is to encourage the creation of cinematography and garner public interest in French cinema.

### NEW TALENT ON DECK: MARINA HANDS

Thirty-year-old actress Marina Hands demonstrated her talent this year in her brilliant portrayal as the sensual and emotionally starved character of "*Lady Chatterley*," for which she received her first César as Best Actress. An equestrian at heart, Hands did not consider a career in acting until her 20s when she entered into the Cours Florent



Marina Hands received a César for her role in "*Lady Chatterley*"

in 1995. She continued her studies at the *Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique* in Paris and then at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. In 1999, she was nominated for a Molière Award for her role in "*Le Bel Air de Londres*." Similar to the Tony Awards in the United States, Molières recognize achievement in the theatrical community. Hands has also starred in a successful television industry and several other movies, including "*La Fidélité*" and "*Les Invasions Barbares*". In 2006, she joined the *Comédie-Française*, the prestigious French national theater troupe, and has since starred in several productions. Whether she decides to continue on the big screen or on the stage, Marina Hands promises to delight audiences around the world for years to come with her exceptional talent and striking beauty.

## Bridging the Atlantic Via Cinema

The cinematic communities in France and the United States often demonstrate their mutual admiration for one another during their respective award ceremonies, and 2007 was no exception. Three of the five films nominated at the Césars for Best Foreign Film were American and included "Little Miss Sunshine," "Brokeback Mountain," and "Babel." This year, American actress Hilary Swank presented the honor to "Little Miss Sunshine," the story of a dysfunctional but loving family and their cross-country quest in a Volkswagen minibus.

At the Academy Awards, French film composer Alexandra Desplat received a nomination for Best Achievement in Music Written for a Motion Picture for "The Queen." Nominated for Best Foreign Language Film was the Franco-Algerian "*Les Indigènes*" or "Days of Glory" which tells the story of four young North Africans who enlist in the French army during the Second World War. "*Les Indigènes*" also received nine nominations at the Césars, including Best Picture and Best Director.

The cross-cultural awards presented at the César and Oscar ceremonies should come as no surprise to audiences that have developed a taste for the cinematic exchange. It is not uncommon to see French actors in American films. Gérard Depardieu, one of France's most

beloved actors, is respected both in France and in the United States. In 1991, he received an Oscar nomination for his role in the immensely popular American romantic comedy "*Cyrano de Bergerac*." He has starred in many other American films, most notably the "Green Card" with Andie MacDowell, Kenneth Branagh's "Hamlet," "She's So Lovely," and "The Man in the Iron Mask."

The name Audrey Tautou is also well known on both sides of the Atlantic. After her internationally acclaimed per-



Hilary Swank presents César for "Little Miss Sunshine"

formance in "*Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain*," Tautou has continued to grace the big screen around the world with her distinctive good looks and her dramatic flair. Furthermore, she starred in "*L'Auberge Espagnole*," which has become a staple of popular culture among youth in the United States. Most recently, she played the role of Agent Sophie Neveu in the "Da Vinci Code" based on the international best seller.

## 2006 an Exceptional Year For Foreign Direct Investment

With over 1.9 million people currently employed by foreign companies, the French economy has steadily set itself apart as an open and attractive environment for foreign investors. According to the recently released annual report by the French Agency for International Investments (AFII), 2006 proved an exceptional step forward in that trend.

The openness and attractiveness of the country's market has been made a priority by the French government. A total of 66 competitive hubs, designed to respond to private and public initiatives of enterprises and research centers, have been officially recognized in France. The government has dedicated 1.5 billion dollars to the development of such competitive market-places over a 3-year period. The effort has been met with approval from investors who appreciate not only France's infrastructure, but the education, productivity and innovation of its workforce. The levels of 2006 Foreign Direct Investment indi-

cate a 32.7 percent increase of foreign investment over 2005, serving as strong evidence of that appreciation.

Of those who invested in 2006, the United States, Germany, United Kingdom, and Sweden were at the source of over 60 percent of jobs that were created. The positive effects of their interest made a significant impact, with foreign investments accounting for a record-breaking creation of 40,000 jobs by foreign enterprises.

"The excellent results for 2006 demonstrate the improvement in France's business environment over the past several years. These are the best results since the annual Review was launched in 1993," states Philippe Favre, Chairman and CEO of AFII.

The AFII continually monitors the trends of Foreign Investment in France. For more information on the agency, or to view the complete report, please visit: [www.investinfrance.org](http://www.investinfrance.org).

## France Announces Opening of Paris School of Economics



D. de Villepin and other gov't officials at ceremony

French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin inaugurated the Paris School of Economics (EEP) in a ceremony February 22 that included Thierry Breton, Minister of Economy, and Gilles de Robien, Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research.

"With the founding of the Paris School of Economics, we

have shown that France remains a breeding ground for excellence, which knows how to reward merit and implement far-reaching projects," stated Villepin.

The EEP represents an alliance between some of the best schools and universities in Paris. EEP hopes to bring together high level researchers to train the leaders of the future by joining together members of top French universities and research institutions, including the prestigious *Ecole normale supérieure* and the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* (CNRS).

"At stake is our diplomatic power, our influence in the world and our ability, as citizens of France and Europe, to fully play our part in building a world of greater equity, balance and respect for individuals," emphasized the Prime Minister. Through a multidisciplinary program of studies that examine the places where economics and other social sciences intersect, the school wishes to contribute to the development of an entirely distinct economic doctrine, which can better analyze the workings of economic activity.

## New Mission to Study Origins of the Universe

Planck is the first European satellite assigned to study the origins of the universe. It will use jointly a low and a high frequency instrument, in order to map the anisotropies of the Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB). This background is the fossil of the "first light" in the universe. The main goal of the Planck mission is to measure very accurately the primary CMB fluctuations — the temperature fluctuations that arise from density fluctuations of the CMB-emitting region itself.

Planck seeks to open windows on essential pieces of information by testing theories concerning the early universe and the origin and content of cosmic structures, which can only result from the study of CMB. In fact, these grains of cosmic energy are so precious that two American probes, the COBE and WMAP, were already dedicated to combing the sky in search of them. COBE, the first probe, was launched in 1989 with an initial mission duration of four years, followed by the currently orbiting NASA satellite, WMAP. COBE detected subtle variations in the temperature of CMB which revealed for the first time the imprint of early ripples in density which are believed to have given rise to the first



Planck Qualification Model

stars and galaxies. WMAP improved that detection. Planck seeks to expand on those research initiatives from a fresh perspective.

Planck will improve on COBE and WMAP because its instrumental capabilities are "30 times more precise than those of the WMAP, and even 1,000 times sharper than those of the COBE," according to Jean-Loup Puget, from the *l'Institut d'Astrophysique Spatiale* (IAS, South Paris). Planck is expected to be launched into orbit together with the Herschel satellite within the first quarter of 2008.

For more information about the Planck and its mission please visit: [www.planck.fr](http://www.planck.fr).

## SPACE SYSTEMS/LORAL CEO WINS PRESTIGIOUS HONOR

*Via Satellite* magazine has named the Chief Executive Officer Patrick DeWitt of Space Systems/Loral as its 2006 Satellite Executive of the Year. Though the competition proved difficult, DeWitt's leadership stood out among the rest, leading SSL to seven new satellite construction awards in 2006 alone in addition to the launch of five SSL-built satellites throughout the year. Jean-Yves Le Gall, General Director of Arianespace, praised DeWitt's competence. "He has a sommelier's understanding of quality when it comes to satellites," Le Gall said. "Since I come from a country that appreciates good wine, I recognize Pat's unique, vintner-like ability to control the quality of satellite production. This ability has served Space System Loral well." DeWitt received his official recognition in Washington D.C., on the occasion of SATELLITE 2007, the first global event for satellite-enabled communications which ran from February 19-22. Upon receiving the honor, DeWitt extended his thanks to the editors of *Via Satellite* and the employees of Space Systems/Loral, and expressed strong gratitude to the European company's "many loyal customers who are the ultimate reason for our success."

## AIR FRANCE ANNOUNCES NEW SERVICES

*Parlez-vous anglais?* Always wanted to visit a foreign country but too nervous because you didn't speak the language? Fear no more! Air France has announced that starting in April passengers aboard its Boeing 777-300s will be able to take language lessons from their individual screens. The service will be available on 17 of Air France's flights, including some from the United States to Europe. Instruction in approximately 23 languages will be offered at the beginner level, including English, French, Italian, Mandarin, Portuguese, Spanish, German, Cantonese, Korean, Greek, Russian, Arabic, Hindi, Dutch, Vietnamese, Turkish, and Danish, among others. A virtual classroom complete with teacher, tests, games, and pronunciation exercises will teach nervous travelers the basics needed to visit their destination. Those planning on taking Air France's newly established Paris-Seattle connection may find themselves with ample time to learn more than just the essentials. Air France announced February 21 the launch of this ten-hour flight which is expected to begin service June 11. "We are very pleased to add Seattle as our newest gateway," said Air France vice president Marie-Joseph Male. The Paris-Seattle link marks the 13th U.S. gateway offered by the airline and the first time it has covered the northwestern market in the United States.



78 million tourists visited France in 2006, making the country once again the most popular tourist destination in the world. The boost in the number of foreign visitors to France has been consistently increasing since 2000. 75 percent of tourists traveling to France are European citizens, with British travelers frequenting the country most often, followed by visitors from Germany. Moreover, there has been a substantial increase in the number of tourists from Spain, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Eastern Europe and particularly from China, as nearly 600,000 Chinese citizens came to France last year. This growing flow of foreigners traveling to France has elevated international tourism revenue by 2.5 percent, reaching a total of 35 billion euros in 2006. Among France's greatest cultural attractions, such as the Eiffel Tower, Pompidou Centre, Versailles and Mont Saint-Michel, the Louvre was the number-one ranked tourist destination, with 7.6 million visitors.

#### FRENCH FIND LOVE ONLINE

The *Champs Elysée*, softly illuminated by evening lights and bustling with candlelit dinners at sidewalk cafés, is not the only place French couples are sharing romantic *rendez-vous*. A recent study has shown that a significant percentage of singles in France are seeking romance on the internet. Over one-fifth of the country's internet users, aged 15 and older, participated in Internet dating sites in December

2006. ComScore Networks, a global Internet research firm which collects information on the Internet industry through a representative panel of two million international users, conducted the recent study, which examined the number of visits to the top five personal sites in France, England and the United States. The results showed that last December, customers of Web site dating services in France held the highest proportion of Internet users worldwide. England trailed slightly behind France, with 20 percent of the British online community spending time on personals sites, followed by the United States which reported only 13 percent of the Internet users as involved with online dating.

The most popular dating Web site in France was [MeetIC.fr](http://MeetIC.fr), with over 2.3 million visitors last December alone.

## Mister France: A "Model" Man For 2007

Crowds went crazy at the end of February, as 24 of France's most seductive and talented young men gathered before the country's most prestigious fashion, media, and show-biz juries to compete for the title of Mister France 2007. The competition required contestants to assemble an hour and a half choreographed performance in five days, in addition to six fashion shows featuring candidates accompanied by women—an appropriate choice for the eve of International Woman's Day. The competition also included numerous guest appearances by some of France's most celebrated television stars, such as Loana Petrucciani, Danièle Gilbert and Michel La Rosa.

After heated competitions in evening wear and swim suits, the jury selected Yoann Crétet, representing the region of Franche-Comté (eastern France), as Mister France 2007. The 28-

year old manager of a fitness club impressed the jury with his display of class and elegance as he took the stage. However, the new Mister France does not consider his good looks to be his only redeeming quality. Crétet revealed in a pre-show interview that he considers some of his additional assets to include his open mind, gentleness, and the fact that he "pays attention to others." As for the qualities that attract Crétet most in a woman, they include "her looks, her discretion, her elegance and her intelligence."



Mr. France 2007

## New Legislation in France Guarantees Housing to All

The French Parliament passed legislation February 22 that made permanent housing, like education, a guaranteed right in France. "Housing is a concern for everyone in France," said French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin, who championed the bill. "In big cities, tourist areas, on the coastline, or in the mountains, it has become a source of inquietude for many families."

The new law states that by December 1, 2008, the French government will be required to provide housing for individuals and families most in need: "those facing the greatest struggles, in particular the homeless, but also low-income workers and single

mothers raising children," said Villepin. By January 1, 2012, the law is expected to extend to those eligible for public housing and to those who have faced an "abnormal delay" in the process.

The decision comes in the wake of the French government's overall fight against poverty. In addition to this new legislation, the government has pledged additional funds to help the homeless and those living in temporary accommodations. France and Scotland are the only ones in Europe to have adopted such legislation, according to the High Committee on Housing for the Underprivileged.

## Psychotherapy University Opens in Paris

Students fascinated by the discipline of psychotherapy made their way to Paris this January to seek the first of diplomas offered by Sigmund Freud University of Paris, the newly-opened French branch of SFU Vienna's world-renowned psychotherapy institute.

Directed by the President of the World Council of Psychotherapy, which is an N.G.O to United Nations' E.C.O.S.O.C, the university provides students with the international training offered at the Vienna, Peking, and St. Petersburg branches, while maintaining a unique focus on psychotherapy.

The university promises to unite the different schools and

modalities in psychotherapy, each of which takes a specific approach, "in order to create a university curriculum and research sector through which each student may develop the practice or method of his or her choice."

Additionally, SFU Paris plans to enrich students' educational experience through university partnerships with schools focusing in other areas of the human sciences as well as offering international exchanges. Diplomas at the Bachelor's and Master's levels are envisaged for students beginning in 2008. For more information regarding the university, please visit: [www.sfu-paris.fr](http://www.sfu-paris.fr)



Fabien's days are politically charged. In the span of mere hours, he has the opportunity to cross the paths of militants and supporters of France's major political candidates, speak with foreign political analysts from Quebec, and visit three official presidential campaign headquarters, all before attending political debates and information sessions in the evening. It may seem surprising that between meetings and *rendez-vous* he finds the time to share his experiences, pictures, and interviews with the audience of his blog: [www.vodkapomme.com](http://www.vodkapomme.com). People may mistake Fabien for a journalist or an aspiring politician. However, the French

university student represents just one of some 30,000 French citizens who have given the political debate a new dimension over the past few months by playing an active part in the virtual world of *Second Life*.

The upcoming presidential elections have caused a sharp rise in the number of French users of *Second Life*, as bloggers and political enthusiasts like Fabien use the forum as a central tool for political debate and discussion. Although the virtual personages, or *avatars*, users create are purely imaginary, the voices behind them are all very real. Meetings in the political campaign headquarters strongly resemble those that take place in real life. Multiple presidential candidates have established vir-

tual campaign headquarters in *Second Life* ([www.seconddlife.com](http://www.seconddlife.com)), which provides a forum for the public to engage in discussion and debate with the candidates themselves or members of their campaign team, to better understand the candidate's political platform. Attendees often report back, as Fabien does, to followers of the online political community, informing everyone else on what they missed while absent from the parallel world.

*News From France does not endorse the content, views and opinions of authors expressed in the aforementioned Web sites. Any views or opinions mentioned therein do not necessarily state or reflect those of the French Government.*

## France and New Orleans Collaborate on Cultural Endeavors

Efforts by France to revive the cultural life of New Orleans have flourished following the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Faithful to the strong historic ties which link France to the state of Louisiana, French officials have been working closely with local art museums in New Orleans on several initiatives designed to support the city's cultural venues, as well as to pay tribute to Louisiana's Cajun and Creole cultural distinctiveness.

French Minister of Culture and Communication Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres traveled to the U.S. March 1-4 within the context of several ambitious cultural cooperation initiatives that have developed between France and Louisiana over the past year. Minister Donnedieu de Vabres and Henri Loyrette, President of the Louvre Museum, collaborated with New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA) director John Bullard to host an exhibition titled "Femme, femme, femme: Paintings of Women in 19th Century French Society" from March 3 to June 2. This exhibition celebrates the emergence of the modern woman, represented in various phases of her life (maternity, profession, hobbies and social life) through paintings such as those of Manet, Toulouse-Lautrec and Picasso. This exhibition was created especially for NOMA

and its paintings originate from more than 40 French museums. During the same time, another exhibition initiated by the Consulate General of France in New Orleans, titled "400 Years of French Presence in Louisiana: Treasures of the National Library of France," took place at The Historic New Orleans Collection (THNOC). THNOC and the National Library of France have selected an ensemble of documents and archives (maps, drawings, manuscripts, prints, photographs, coins and rare books) showing the extent of France's presence since the discovery of Louisiana until today.



The Beer Waitress, 1878, Manet

Courtesy: NOMA



Reliquary of the Holy Cross of Khotakerats, opened, Region of Vayots Dzor, 1300 Gilded silver, wood, colored stones.

## Armenia sacra debuts at the Louvre

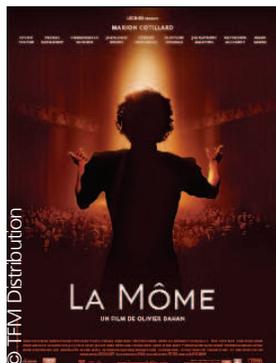
French President Jacques Chirac paused thoughtfully in front of the "reliquary of Noah's Ark" on February 19. The reliquary, which houses the piece of mineralized wood that was once atop Mount Ararat in the 17th century, represents only one of the nearly 200 illuminated manuscripts, reliquaries, pieces of silverware, and other works that make up the *Armenia sacra* exhibition, on display at the Louvre from February 21 to May 21 in celebration of the "Year of Armenia" in France, an initiative consisting of multiple cultural events from September 21 to July 14, which celebrate Franco-Armenian friendship. French Minister of Culture Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres launched the initiative and accompanied President Chirac and Armenian President Robert Kocharyan during their visit to the Louvre. The two presidents jointly inaugurated the museum's exhibition—the first of its kind to highlight the evolution of Armenian Christian art as it flourished from the 4th to 18th centuries, evolving under the influences of Byzantium and Islam, Orient and the Crusades, and the Persian and Ottoman empires. For more information on the exhibit, please visit: [www.louvre.fr](http://www.louvre.fr).

## Film Exploring Life of Edith Piaf Featured at Berlin

The 57th annual Berlin Film Festival opened February 8 with a film exploring the life of Edith Piaf, the legendary French singer and cultural icon. Taking its name from one of Piaf's most popular songs, "La Vie en Rose," the film explores the life of the legendary singer renowned for her extraordinary voice and tragic love songs. The trials and obstacles faced by Piaf often revealed themselves in the soft vibrato of the *Titi Parisienne*, or child of Paris, entrancing audiences with the simplicity of her charm. Her songs came to define the genre of *chanson française*, the classic French song of the '50s, '60s, and '70s known for its elegant and poetic expression of social themes, spirituality and love.

Olivier Dahan directed this star-studded cast which included Gérard Depardieu and up-and-coming French actress Marion Cotillard as Piaf. "It wasn't just an imitation of Edith Piaf," explained Cotillard who lip-synched to orig-

inal Piaf recordings for the film, "I wanted to do more than that — I wanted to bring her to life [...]. She still manages to reach even younger generations, she still moves them."



Called "La Môme" or "The Kid" in France (Piaf's nickname,) the film begins with a picture of the petite young woman in her 20s and ends with her untimely death from cancer at the age of 47 in 1963. Despite her success as an internationally acclaimed vocalist, Piaf suffered from loneliness and depression as well as drug and alcohol dependency.

A total of 373 films were shown at the ten-day festival, one of the top three in Europe. Other French films presented included André Techine's "Les Témoins" ("The Witnesses") which explores the beginning of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and "Angel" by François Ozon, the story of the life of a young woman in early 20th century England.

## FEMALE CHEF WINS MICHELIN 3 STARS

France's *Michelin guidebook* series announced February 22 that the coveted three-star rating has been awarded to a restaurant run by a female chef. The lucky recipient, the partially self-taught *cuisinière* Anne-Sophie Pic is from a long line of chefs including a father and grandfather, who also received three-star awards. "If I can encourage people and show them that you can accomplish a lot of things then I'll do it," she told French television. "Everything is possible as long as you are willing to take your passions as far as they'll go." In addition to Pic, only three other women have been so prestigiously honored since the creation of the award in 1926. Her restaurant, Maison Pic located in Valence, Southeastern France, boasts a "personal, stripped down, modern" cuisine, with specialties such as lobster and artichokes with foie gras and fresh nuts caramelized in a quince jelly. *Michelin guidebooks* are well respected throughout France and have been regarded as arbiters of culinary excellence for the past century. In the 2007 guide, which was released February 28, a total of five new three-star awards were announced, bringing the total number of recipients up to 26.

## LANCE ARMSTRONG'S IMPACT ON BICYCLE RACING

Lance Armstrong, seven-time *Tour de France* winner and athlete extraordinaire, continues to motivate Americans, especially youth, to pursue the sport of bicycle racing. Despite fears that the United States would lose interest in competitive cycling after Armstrong retired in 2005, Americans continue to demonstrate their enthusiasm. Following the inspiration of Armstrong's success in the *Tour de France*, sponsorship for U.S.-based professional teams has increased. The sport has also seen the development of new multi-day stage races in Georgia, Utah, Missouri, and Virginia. Americans have taken note, and in 2006, the largest number of riders ever, 60,000, registered for official USA Cycling racing licenses. Whether competing in the *Tour* or not, Armstrong has left his mark on the future of cycling in both France and the United States. "When I left, my desire was to see the sport thrive," said Armstrong, "I can now stand around like a proud father and be very happy with what is happening."

## VCU Film Festival

The Virginia Commonwealth University will host its 14th annual French Film Festival March 31 through April 2 at the celebrated Byrd Theatre in Richmond, Virginia. Every year, the film festival, which is the largest French film festival in the United States, features a diverse selection of 13 films and 11 short films that depict contemporary French cinema. For more information, please visit: [www.frenchfilm.vcu.edu](http://www.frenchfilm.vcu.edu).

### News from FRANCE

#### EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Nathalie Loiseau

#### EDITORS

Agnès von der Mühl, Valérie Luebken

#### MANAGING EDITOR

Thomas Rottcher

#### SENIOR WRITER

Elizabeth Farabee

#### WRITERS

Alicia Kenworthy, Corinne Cozort, Christopher Leydig, Carleigh Connelly, Elise Yakuboff

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#### NEWS FROM FRANCE

#### FRENCH EMBASSY PRESS & INFORMATION SERVICE

4101 Reservoir Road, NW  
Washington, DC 20007-2182  
Tel: (202) 944-6060  
Fax: (202) 944-6072

#### E-mail:

[info@ambafrance-us.org](mailto:info@ambafrance-us.org)

[www.ambafrance-us.org](http://www.ambafrance-us.org)  
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France in America

CHEZ NOUS

## La Francophonie: Month-long Celebration of French Speaking Cultures

A belly dancer manipulates her pulsating hips across a dance floor, provocatively swaying to the reverberations of an exotic cadence as the Casablanca Band strikes the desired musical vibrations... So begins the *Grande Fête de la Francophonie*, just one of the events offered throughout the month of March during the celebration of The Month of the Francophonie. The month-long series of events will include live band performances, movie screenings and other cultural events.

*La Francophonie*, a term coined in 1880 by geographer Onésime Reclus and fathered by poet and Senegalese president Léopold Sédar Senghor, describes the linguistic and cultural community, which shares one common thread the French language. In its broadest meaning, *La Francophonie* encompasses all efforts to promote French language and values. In French, the term is used to describe the Francophone Community, which unites 175 million people inhabiting 63 different countries.

*La Francophonie* is a mosaic of peoples who nurture a common cultural goal to promote linguistic and cultural diversity. The term unites countries with different histories and cultures, all of which celebrate a common heritage yet strive to affirm their unique identity in the globalizing world.

The Embassy of France in Washington, D.C., will be working closely with embassies of 47 other countries, including

Belgium, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, and Switzerland to present a diverse array of cultures.

Various cities throughout the United States are offering celebrations of *La Francophonie*. The following is a short list of events available through French Consulates and participating *Alliances Françaises* throughout the country.

*Un goût de la Francophonie*, dinner celebration of the multi-farious cuisine of the French-speaking world (in New England March 23.) *L'Europe Francophone au Siècle des Lumières* (Francophone Europe throughout the Enlightenment), lecture by Axel Maugey (in Los Angeles March 16). *Haiti: Music, Dance & Food*, Louis-Philippe Valcy and the Chicago BARAKS (in San

Francisco March 17.) "Texas-French Symposium," lectures (in Houston March 30.) *Les Nubians*, live concert performance by top French-Cameroonian successes (Washington, D.C. March 29-30.) Further information can be obtained through your nearest consulate or the Alliance Française's Web site: [www.afusa.org](http://www.afusa.org).

Atlanta ([www.consulfrance-atlanta.org](http://www.consulfrance-atlanta.org))

New England ([www.franco-newengland.org](http://www.franco-newengland.org))

Los Angeles ([www.consulfrance-losangeles.org](http://www.consulfrance-losangeles.org))

Miami ([www.consulfrance-miami.org](http://www.consulfrance-miami.org))

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Texas ([www.francophonie-texas.org](http://www.francophonie-texas.org))

Washington, D.C. ([www.francophoniedc.org](http://www.francophoniedc.org))

New York ([www.consulfrance-newyork.org](http://www.consulfrance-newyork.org))



The streets of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, celebrate *la Francophonie*