March has been another robust month in relations between France and the United States. The events in Ukraine have shown French and Euro-American cooperation at its best, and we will continue to work hard together toward a settlement of the crisis. That was the message I conveyed, along with my German and British colleagues, on CNN’s “State of the Union” with Candy Crowley on March 16.

In French-American culture, I traveled to New York on March 5 to decorate Tom Kaplan with the Legion of Honor, France’s highest award. Well-known to New Yorkers for his service as Chairman of the Board of the city’s 92nd Street Y, Mr. Kaplan, a businessman who is also a committed philanthropist, has shown exceptional leadership in cultural and charitable work around the world.

I was also pleased to see French industry recognized, when on March 6 the trade magazine Aviation Week granted a Laureate Award to the Neuron, an unmanned aircraft designed by France’s Defense Procurement Agency (DGA), the French company Dassault Aviation, and groups from six other European countries. Jean-Yves Le Gall, President of France’s space agency CNES, was also recognized. I applaud these leading French players in defense and aerospace innovation.

Perhaps the most prominent French-American event this month was the Francophonie Cultural Festival, which began in early March and continues through mid-April. As part of a global event held in connection with the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF), the Embassy of France and the French Consulates General in the United States have put together programs, seminars, and events of all kinds to celebrate the global presence and dynamism of the French language. The Embassy’s activities in Washington reached a high point on March 21, when we hosted the Grande Fête de la Francophonie.

France and the U.S. also partnered in the rapidly evolving sector of sustainable development. On March 13 during a ceremony at the Embassy of France, I signed an agreement with Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe on sustainable practices. The accord covers sustainability projects that will create jobs, enhance quality of life, and promote green development habits that are viable in the long term.

In short, March has showcased the vitality of efforts between French and American friends across a broad set of areas, whether in global conflicts, culture, innovation, or sustainable development. I am confident we’ll continue to achieve remarkable success together on the road ahead.
NY Consulate Showcases Talent of French Gastronomy

On March 17, the Consulate General of France in New York hosted an event that served as the launch of a new series called “Les Chefs du 934” or The Chefs of 934, in reference to the Consulate’s street address.

As part of the new program, the consulate will host four dinners a year. The goal of the meals is to showcase the skill of young French chefs established in New York and new French wine-growers. At the events, their talents will be displayed to approximately forty guests, including 10 journalists.

The dinner this March was prepared by France’s Eric Ripert, the star chef of the New York restaurant Le Bernardin. Mr. Ripert specializes in modern French cuisine, and is well known for his work with seafood. George Sape and Omar Khan, the wine experts of Les Chefs du 934, were primarily responsible for the selection of the French wines that were paired with the main courses.

The chefs were selected by the organizing committee of Les Chefs du 934. The committee members include Bertrand Lortholary, Consul General of France in New York.

Embassy Hosts Retrospective on Prominent French Actress

This March, the Cultural Services of the Embassy of France held a film retrospective honoring Emmanuelle Riva, the French actress best known for her work in Hiroshima Mon Amour.

As part of this year’s Francophonie Cultural Festival, the event featured three films: Amour, followed by Liberté, La Nuit, and Léon Morin, Prêtre. The motion pictures were shown at the Embassy on March 10, 11, and 17 with the help of the French-American Cultural Foundation in Washington.

Amour, one of Ms. Riva’s most recent films, won the Palme d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 2012 and the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film at the 85th Academy Awards the same year. At the same event, she was also nominated for Best Actress, the oldest actress to have ever been, at the age of 86.

The U.S. premiere of Savannah Bay, a French theater production featuring Ms. Riva, took place at Washington’s Kennedy Center on March 19. The Théâtre de l’Atelier presented the performances as part of the institution’s 2014 World Stages International Theater Festival.

As part of this year’s 70th anniversary ceremonies of the D-Day landing in Normandy, a delegation of elected officials from La Manche came to Houston to honor U.S. veterans of the Second World War on March 15 and 16.

Jean-François Le Grand, President of the General Council of La Manche region, Marc Lefèvre, Mayor of Sainte-Mère-Eglise, and Henri Milet, Mayor of Sainte-Marie-du-Mont, led the delegation from La Manche, which includes Normandy. The veterans were presented with special awards, including sand from Utah Beach, one of the key battle sites of the D-Day operation.

The group’s first visit coincided with the centennial celebration of the Battleship Texas, a historic anniversary celebrating the vessel’s efforts in both World Wars. More than 20 former Battleship Texas crew members were honored at the event.

The ceremony took place at the San Jacinto Battleground State Historical Site near Houston, where the Battleship Texas is docked. In addition to the award presentation, the celebration’s schedule of events included tours of the ship, fireworks, food, and gun simulations.

In addition, the event incorporated live music into the program. The country duo Kelly Willis and Bruce Robison, singer-songwriter Charlie Robison, alternative country group Reckless Kelly, and Americana singer-songwriter Robert Earl Keen all performed. With nearly all artists hailing from the Texas, the lineup provided to the event a strong dose of local pride.

Brigadier General Brently White hosted the second ceremony, which was held at the Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base. The French delegation presented over 20 World War II veterans with the honors. Students from Awty International School, a college preparatory school with a strong French background, as well as cadets from the Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (JROTC) program at Jefferson Davis High School, also attended the event.

Ambassador, VA Governor Sign Sustainability Agreement

(From page 1) On March 13 at the Embassy of France in Washington, Ambassador François Delattre and Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe signed an agreement on sustainable development.

The event highlighted a new partnership between France and Virginia focused on enhancing green management, growing the economy, and creating jobs.

Both Ambassador Delattre and Governor McAuliffe gave speeches prior to signing the accord. Virginia state officials attended along with business leaders and French diplomatic personnel.

In the Ambassador’s speech, he touched upon how these top challenges “represent a unique opportunity to exchange best practices to foster innovation and business.”
Interview with the Expert

Irène Serot-Alméras, Director of Civil Society Cooperation

How does a government work with well, those who aren't in the government? How can a foreign embassy engage with local communities to effect positive change? Irène Serot-Alméras would know. As the head of the French Embassy's work with civil society groups—everything from charities and civic associations to interest and advocacy groups—and told News From France just how much French and U.S. organizations are accomplishing together.

What is your role at the Embassy of France?
I am in charge of the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society Organizations. This office is part of the Cultural Services of the Embassy. Our main purpose is to be the voice of French civil society, but also to capture what is going on in American civil society. We are the office that supports relations between American civil society and French civil society.

How would you describe your interaction with the French government, given your role in Washington?
My position is quite unique. The Office for Cooperation with Civil Society Organizations is the only one of its kind across all French embassies and consulates worldwide. It was created in 2002 as a cross-cutting entity by the Directorate General of Globalization within the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As for interacting with the French government, President François Hollande is dedicated to including civil society stakeholders in all issues. For example, France is going to host the COP21 [Conference of the Parties, an environmental summit organized by the United Nations] in Paris in December 2015. President Hollande has already said that the participation of civil society organizations is really important to him. It is a key event for my office also.

In terms of concrete examples of cooperation, can you give us one or two?
These last few months, our government has really thought over its development policies. We looked all over the United States to determine what the innovations for development were, and how they were implemented in the field. Beginning in 2011, we launched a call for proposals, whose goal is to reinforce collaboration between French NGOs and American NGOs. These collaborations can be in human rights, in gender issues—it is meant to be very open.

For example, this year we’ve helped cooperation between a French and an American NGO who both are involved in solar cooking, and they’re going to build an advocacy program here in the United States and hopefully will succeed in creating links with a related program launched by United Nations Foundation. So each year, we help three or four French NGOs working with American counterparts to build long-term partnerships.

Has anything surprised or impressed you about the American NGO and civil society landscape?
Yes, several things. First, the think tank world is absolutely huge in the United States. The power of these organizations—and the way they produce intellectual thought here—is amazing. That’s why I gather all the information from the field, then transmit it back to our French counterparts.

How does the Embassy cooperate as a whole to work with U.S. civil society groups?
I’ll give you two examples. Last year, we organized a big fundraising event to help Les Petits Frères des Pauvres, a French charity, to support their American counterpart, Little Brothers of the Elderly. It was not a French NGO coming to United States to seek money for themselves—it was them coming here to help their American counterpart. Ambassador François Delattre helped them from the beginning, and he also attended the event.

The second example is when the Les Apprentis d’Auteuil came to the Embassy and met with our Ambassador. Together, they created, in association with Les Apprentis d’Auteuil, a “Club of Ambassadors.” The Club is composed of successful individuals whose goal is to leverage their professional and personal networks to serve Les Apprentis. This was launched in our Ambassador’s residence. This is the kind of concrete help we provide to French partners.

A second thing is that the landscape of American foundations is huge. They’re worth billions of dollars. But they also face exactly the same problems that their counterparts in France do: effective philanthropy, transparency, flexibility, and so on. For both reasons, I’ve created a newsletter—I give all the information I can gather to NGOs in France and all events I can attend to the French foundations, representatives of French foundations, and of course to my counterpart in the Foreign Ministry.

How does anything surprise or impress you about the American NGO and civil society landscape?
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French Animated Film Brings Home Academy Award

French film Mr. Hublot won the Academy Award for Best Animated Short in 2014 on March 2.

French director Laurent Witz and Luxembourg director Alexandre Espigares said they did not expect to win the Academy Award.

The production was Mr. Witz’s first experience with film. Mr. Espigares’s résumé includes work on the films “Iron Man 3,” “9,” “Reddick.”

Mr. Hublot is about a part-man, part-robot who lives in a world where beings are made of mechanical parts. He is a withdrawn character who fears change and the outside world. The emotionally troubled character’s dull routine begins to change when he befriends a puppy-like robot whom he takes into his home.

Mr. Witz said his goal in creating the film was “to create emotion and poetry, and to make a movie on a small budget and pretend it’s a big budget.”

The short film was released October 15, 2013, and is 11 minutes long. It was co-produced by Watt Frame and ZEILT Productions.

Le Petit Prince Inspires Public School Writing Contest

The French Heritage Language Program, in partnership with the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF) and the Succession Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, sponsored a writing contest in New York City this month promoting human and children’s rights.

The competition, called Le Petit Prince in honor of the most famous work by author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, took place from February 3 to March 20 and was open to all high school students in New York City. On March 28 during Little Prince Day at the New York Public Library, Kervens Saint Surin was announced the first place winner.

Le Petit Prince is used by the United Nations in its child-focused Know Your Rights campaign to help children be better informed about their rights.

The contest occurred at the same time as the worldwide Fête de la Francophonie, which was organized by the OIF to promote French language and highlight the cultural offerings of French-speaking populations around the world. Le Petit Prince, which inspired this particular event, is both the most read and most translated book in the French language.
French-Speaking Cultures Celebrated Throughout U.S.

Every spring, a multitude of festivals celebrating “La Francophonie,” or the French-speaking world, open throughout the United States. The efforts in the U.S. are part of a larger set of events coordinated by the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), a Paris-based international body that seeks to advance and defend the culture and democratic ideals which the French language has helped to spread worldwide.

News From France takes you further into the concept of La Francophonie, its celebrations across America, and the Grande Fête de la Francophonie, an annual reception at the Embassy of France in Washington that was held on March 21 this year.

Francophonie as a Concept

The reason behind the annual Francophonie festivals, in the United States and around the world, stems from a broader concept of what the French language represents. The OIF, which was founded in 1970 and now includes 77 member nations, describes the idea of la Francophonie as both a language and a spirit of humanist values. The ideals that helped spark the French Revolution—like democracy, fundamental rights and freedoms, and human progress—are the same ones that animate the OIF’s mission today, as well as better-known organizations such as the United Nations, of which France has been an active member since its founding in 1945. French also serves as one of the UN’s six official languages, and, along with English, one of the two working languages of the organization.

Therefore, as a global language, French is uniquely positioned to advance and promote the values which many have and still others struggle for in developing democracies throughout the world.

French Across the U.S.

Throughout March and into April, a host of French-language-related events took place across the United States. From Maine to California, here’s a look at some of the Francophonie celebrations this year.

In Atlanta, the Consulate General of France has for the last 15 year helped lead an organizing committee to share the culture and diversity of the French-speaking world. The Atlanta Francophonie Festival ran from March 14 through 30 and offered a rich palette of events. Jazz from Switzerland, movies from Belgium, and performances from the Théâtre du Rêve—the only French-speaking theater company in the United States—made for a memorable Francophonie series this year. The Consulate General of France in Boston brought together the Month of Francophonie in New England. Over 700 youngsters joined in the school program De la BELique à l’Acadie, which included a flashmob and a song series devoted to French-Canadian culture. The “Soirée Francophone: Mais Oui!” gathered 600 partygoers for dancing and performances by DJs from France, Togo, and Algeria.

Chicago organized a similarly large set of offerings, where the city’s Alliance Française played a large role in coordinating events. Programs included the Dis-Moi Dix Mots (Tell Me 10 Words) contest to a roundtable, Women and Francophonie, on March 8.

Working with France’s consulate in Houston, the states of Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas enjoyed some 30 cultural and educational events last month. La Femme, one of France’s most buzzworthy up-and-coming rock bands, played to a packed open-air concert in Houston on March 7. The consulate’s Cultural Services also provided opportunities in French-language education: teachers had access to advanced training courses, while aspiring students of French entered contests for the chance to win nearly $7,000 in scholarship funds.

The French consulate in Los Angeles bore a university-centered focus this year. Over four days, the University of Southern California, University of California-Los Angeles, California State University Long Beach, and the University of California-Irvine participated jointly in French language workshops and film projections. The city’s consulates of Québec, Belgium, Lebanon, and Armenia also collaborated, each having historical ties to France and the French language.

Revisiting their highly successful French Week from March 15 through 23, the French Cultural Services in Miami hosted events with their Canadian and Haitian counterparts. With emphasis on French language education, K-12 students of French in the entire state Florida participated in a language contest and other associated activities.

Given its historical place as home for generations of French speakers, New Orleans witnessed a typically robust set of events promoting French language under this year’s slogan, “Be French for a Month.” The local Alliance Française, as well as local universities and the city’s French-American Chamber of Commerce, organized a photo contest, the annual Alliance Française gala, an academic lecture on French literature icon Émile Zola, and film screenings.

Never to be outdone, the Cultural Services of France’s consulate in New York City, along with a numerous set of other partners, played host to a unique contest inspired by Le Petit Prince, the world-famous children’s book by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. Students were encouraged to write their own essays on the importance of human rights and children’s rights, and the winner was awarded at the New York Public Library on March 28 (see p. 3).

Last but far from least, San Francisco saw its own program centered around the Soirée de la Francophonie. Coordinated by the Alliance Française, the evening featured dancing, live music, selections of African beers and food, French wines, and Swiss treats, the event truly offered something for everyone.

Washington’s Grande Fête

In terms of sheer size, Washington, D.C., attracted the largest number of visitors, guests, and French language lovers of all kinds. The Francophonie Cultural Festival, which channels the efforts of 35 Francophone delegations in the U.S. capital, runs from early March through mid-April each year. A major highlight of the event is the Grande Fête de la Francophonie, held at the Embassy of France, which opened with panache this year on March 21.

Each participating delegation, which included countries as exotic as Cap Verde, Laos, and Benin, set up a stand at which they offered traditional food and drink to visitors. The evening also included dancing and giveaways. Yet perhaps the most exciting aspect of the evening was the music. Jornion and the Uklos, a world music trio from Benin, played an eclectic mix of African and Caribbean numbers. La Femme—the same group that played in Houston earlier in the month—headlined the event, playing tunes from their album Psycho Tropical Berlin, which was awarded this year’s Victoire, France’s equivalent to the Grammys, for Best New Album. Audience members from all over the Washington area (indeed, the world) heard the new act as part of an evening full of cultural discoveries in music, food, and world cultures.

In short, the ideas and events of La Francophonie received considerable attention in the United States this year. The Francophonie concept, originating in France’s revolutionary ideals and carried out through bodies like the OIF, and the UN continue to advance French language and values. The extensive network of French consulates, Alliance Française chapters, and other champions promoted French language nationwide. At the Embassy, the Grande Fête de la Francophonie marked a high point in the six weeks of the Francophonie Cultural Festival that Washingtonians look forward to every spring. With just as much lined up for the next Francophonie celebrations, planning has already begun for 2015.
Clockwise from top left: Laotian ladies dress to impress; the world’s Francophones share stories over international cuisine; a family celebrates French-speaking cultures; women from Cap Verde highlight the diversity of their islands; a Moroccan reveler leads the dancing; and one of the members of La Femme spread French rock in the U.S.
Ten French Startups Show at South by Southwest Festival

Early this March, the Cultural Services of the Embassy of France launched a new initiative at the 2014 South by Southwest (SXSW) Festival in Austin, Texas. The Embassy, in collaboration with Ubifrance, France’s trade commission, Bonjour SXSW, Cap Digital, Bureau Export, and Invest in France Agency, introduced entrepreneurs and tech visionaries to promote the most innovative French companies and ensure their presence at the festival.

Ten French startups were selected by a jury of experts in the digital field to represent France at SXSW in the French Pavilion. The companies in attendance included Azendoo, Bobler, Djehoui, Evergig, Intuila, Meludia, Openclassrooms, Sounderbox, Whyd, and Wiseband.

The French Embassy and Ubifrance hosted various events at the French Pavilion during the festival, including brunches, concerts, showrooms, and meetings. The programming supported the new policy of the French Minister of Foreign Trade Nicole Bricq, which is aimed at supporting better communication between France and its business partners abroad.

The presence of the French companies at SXSW is also a sign of the recent dynamics of the French startup community. Ubifrance is fully committed to assisting French companies and supporting their development through various programs. It is now also an active member of the U.S.-French Tech Hub, which was recently inaugurated in February during President Hollande’s visit to San Francisco.

French Aviation Company Wins Defense Industry Award

At a ceremony held in Washington, D.C., on March 6 organized by the defense and aeronautics magazine Aviation Week, Dassault Aviation and the French Defense Procurement Agency (DGA) were announced the joint winners of a Laureate Award for their nEUROn program, an Unmanned Combat Air Vehicle (UCAV).

The nEUROn is being developed by the DGA-Dassault aviation partnership in collaboration with six other European countries. The nEUROn’s first flight in December 2012, and all efforts in the project since, demonstrates the capability of French industry to actively participate in the future of combat aircraft systems. It also illustrates the commitment by the French government to both be a major actor in the future of defense and to help unify international efforts in the defense field.

The nEUROn program was initiated in 2003 by the French government through the DGA with Dassault Aviation as the primary contractor. The goal for the program was to demonstrate the maturity and the effectiveness of innovation to face the main challenges of the future combat aircraft industry for the next two decades, and to show that French innovation and industry have a role to play therein.

The prize given by Aviation Week honors the achievements of the global aerospace and defense industries. The distinction also recognizes the technological challenges performed and the innovative solutions engineered to develop the nEUROn, which is among the first large stealth drones made in Europe.

Airbus, a European aircraft manufacturing division of Airbus Group, based outside Toulouse, France, was also nominated for the prize. Other French entities were also awarded with Aviation Week honors in innovation, research, space, aeronautics, drones, and defense. Jean-Yves Le Gall, who spent ten years as President of French company Arianespace and who is now President of French space agency CNES, was also recognized.
Richmond, Va., Organizes 22nd French Film Festival

From March 27 through 30, Richmond’s historic Byrd Theatre showed the 22nd annual French Film Festival, featuring French works and serving as the center of the festival’s conferences, Q&As, and other opportunities for Virginians to explore French films of all kinds.

Since 1993, the series has brought new and classic French cinema to the state capital. Its founders, Dr. Peter and Françoise Kirkpatrick, personify a French-American partnership (and marriage) that seeks to spread appreciation of the septième art throughout the U.S. Mid-Atlantic region. The program’s partners include Virginia Commonwealth University and the University of Richmond, where each of the festival’s founders teach, respectively.

The event has grown in size and stature over the last 20 years. Its organizers “used to have trouble finding enough movies... Now the difficulty is having to refuse [participants] because of the high demand,” explains Claude Miller, a French director who has been involved with the festival.

In addition to screenings of the films themselves, attendees also had the chance to learn about the process of creating movies. Sessions included “Artistic Creative Stages of Filmmaking,” as well as a rare showing of “Le Raid Paris-Monte Carlo En Deux Heures,” a 1905 comedy from the French early cinema pioneer, Georges Méliès.

Le Congrès de la Culture Française Returns to Florida

This year marked the 62nd anniversary of Le Congrès de la Culture Française en Floride, an annual contest in which Florida high school students are invited to demonstrate their skills and understanding of the French language. The 2014 Congrès took place from March 13 through 15.

The goal of the competition is to encourage students in Florida to study French culture and language, and to provide an opportunity for young Francophiles to gather and share their mutual interest.

Participating students compete in categories such as reading comprehension, speaking, poetry, and cultural trivia. The competition has become a much larger affair since the inaugural event. Every year, a board of students and sponsors are elected to plan and prepare for the competition. Le Congrès takes place annually in Orlando. More than 1,500 students from 100 schools around Florida come together to compete and the prizes range from scholarship awards to summer trips to France.

Le Congrès was founded in the fall of 1952 when three French teachers from Jacksonville, Fla., decided to organize a gathering for students studying French in their state. The first Congrès took place in April 1953 in the Provencal house of Rollins College with seven participants.

Following the debut of the competition, Le Congrès took place in the Provencal House. Beginning in 1962, thanks to an invitation from Suzanne Carrell, the CCFF was held at Jacksonville University, where it took place for several consecutive years before moving to Orlando.

Suzanne Carrell, a Jacksonville University professor, used the CCFF to promote the French-American relationship and increase the willingness of people to learn and participate in the use of the French language. Ms. Carrell was awarded the rank of Chevalier in France’s Legion of Honor for her efforts with CCFF in 2002, which was the 50th anniversary of the organization's establishment.

Le Congrès de la Culture Française en Floride encourages French language study in the state’s high schools.

Rising Star Pianist Gives Free Concert at the Embassy

French pianist Bertrand Chamayou gave a free concert at the Embassy of France in the U.S. on March 18. He selected works of Franz Schubert, including “Wanderer-Fantasie” and “12 Ländler D 790.”

Mr. Chamayou was born in 1981 in Toulouse, France. He studied piano with Jean-François Heisser at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris. Later, Mr. Chamayou trained with Maria Curcio in London.

Also during this year’s concert season, Mr. Chamayou will perform with the Deutsche Sinfonie Orchester the NDR Sinfonie Orchester in Hamburg with Semyon Bychkov and with the Oregon Symphony Orchestra. There will be a recital at the Lincoln Center in New York.

Mr. Chamayou won Gramophone’s Choice and other awards for his recording of Years of Pilgrimage by Franz Liszt. He also won a Victoire de la Musique as “Soloist of the Year.”

The artist has performed at Théâtre des Champs Elysées, New York’s Lincoln Center and the Mostly Mozart Festival.

Alliance Française LA Hosts Talk on Life in the Universe

On March 6, the Alliance Française of Los Angeles hosted its latest “Café des Sciences,” a scientific roundtable with a focus on life in the universe.

Organized in conjunction with the Office for Science and Technology of the Consulate General of France in Los Angeles and the Consulate General of Belgium, the Alliance Française held the event in their offices. The evening’s program consisted of a presentation, discussion, and reception.

University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Professor Jean-Luc Margot gave the presentation in French. Professor Margot’s talk focused on the possibility of life in the universe and what makes this universe habitable, a discipline referred to as astrobiology. A question-and-answer session—moderated in French and English—and a cocktail reception followed afterward.

The event is part of a series of scientific conversations for the benefit of the French, Francophone, and Francophile communities in the area. Each Café des Sciences aims to connect these communities with a French scientist working and conducting research in the United States. The series is free of charge and open to the public.
French Baseball Team Competes in Arizona Spring Training

From March 3 to 13, the French national baseball team competed in Spring Training sessions in Phoenix, where they played against teams associated with Major League Baseball franchises.

During the ten-day event, the French team, called “Les Bleus,” played five matches against feeder teams associated with the major league ball clubs from Los Angeles, San Diego, Seattle, and Chicago.

During their time in Phoenix, Les Bleus also had the opportunity to meet Dodgers legend, manager Tommy Lasorda. Les Bleus are managed by Quebec native and former Dodgers’ closing pitcher, Eric Gagné. Known by his nickname “Game Over,” Mr. Gagné holds a record for 82 consecutive saves, a distinction that earned him the 2003 National League Cy Young Award.

Mr. Gagné is now resuming his career in baseball—as a coach. Last year, he began serving as pitching coach for the French national team during the World Baseball Series, and shortly thereafter took over the head coaching position. He says that, through his new role in the sport, he has rediscovered “that passion for the game” by helping young players excel.

The team participated in the tournament in preparation of the European Baseball Championship taking place in September, seeking to learn from playing against higher-level competition. During the series, Les Bleus will compete against European teams in Germany and the Czech Republic.