

# Let's Eat Cake!

By Sophie Braccini

On September 6th 2007, the Marquis de La Fayette would turn 250 years old. At age nineteen, the bold teenager who embarked for the Americas against his family's will could not have imagined that so many years later he would still be celebrated in the country he was setting out to help free. In the United States there are more than two dozen cities and towns named after La Fayette, as well as a river in Virginia and a mountain in New Hampshire. Many of these locations are planning festivities honoring the life and legacy of the French citizen and hero of the American Revolution. Residents of Lafayette have not forgotten why our city bears his name. When Paul Fillinger, President of the Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary, met with former Consul Général of France Frédéric Desagneaux last year, the two men discussed a memorable and meaningful way to celebrate the Marquis' birthday.

Catherine Jolivet, founder of French for Fun, a French school and cultural center located in Lafayette, also wanted to celebrate. A member of the Chamber of Commerce, she contacted Chamber Executive Director Jay Lifson, who suggested including a birthday celebration with the first "Jazz on the Plaza" concert on September 7th. That evening the Fred Randolph Combo will play and all are invited to bring a picnic, but don't bring dessert. At the concert break a very large cake donated by the Walnut Creek French restaurant "Le Bistro," and cakes donated by the families of French for Fun, will be shared with all in honor of the young hero of the War for Independence. The Lafayette Chamber is providing utensils and Bank of the West the balloons. Jolivet convinced local merchants such as Trader Joe's and Diablo Foods to flag their French products, so those

who want to plan a French picnic can do it painlessly.

On the actual birthday, Sept. 6th, the City of Lafayette and the French Consulate in San Francisco will hold an official private ceremony. It will be hosted by the Lafayette Park Hotel and supported by the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce. Generations in Jazz, the Lafayette Historical Society, Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary and Lafayette Rotary are sponsoring the event. Volunteers serving the City of Lafayette have been invited in thanks for their service to the community. The new Consul Général, Pierre-Francois Mourier, and Pierre Mattot, the consulate's Press Attaché, will represent the French. Among the large American contingent will be Lafayette Mayor Carol Federighi, Lifson and Fillinger. During the ceremony, watercolor panels created by local artist John Finger will be unveiled. These panels, sponsored by Lafayette's two Rotary Clubs, represent the life of the Marquis de La Fayette and are to serve as the base for a mural.

Mattot expresses his enthusiasm by saying that "this commemoration is the celebration of French-American friendship. That relationship was forged on the battlefields of the Revolutionary War and beyond. We are proud to come to Lafayette to celebrate with our American friends."





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