



# Ooh la la!

## Oklahoma Culinary Programs Cook up Great Partnerships with French Counterparts

BY BELINDA MCCHAREN

**B**on jour, merci, au revoir were heard in France but with an odd Oklahoma accent. The dream of the Franco-Oklahoma partnership was being realized. It all began over a year ago when Chantal Manes, now from the French Ministry of Education, visited Oklahoma. The Technologie Academie in Soissons, France, had a goal for all the career and technical students in the Picardie Region of France to have an international experience before completing their technical program.

Manes was visiting Oklahoma on another project but wanted to connect with the career tech system. Meanwhile, the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technical Education identified in its strategic plan the importance of preparing CTE students for the global economy. The goals of the two were aligned and ready to be realized in an unexpected way.

Conversations were begun during Manes' visit to Oklahoma. During her subsequent visit, arrangements were made for a tour of Francis Tuttle Technology Center, because she wanted to see an American technology school. During the

tour, the idea was sparked for an initial partnership; the culinary program at Francis Tuttle seemed a good match with the French culinary academies. When she met Chef Claes Passmark, the ideas began to flow, along with the chef's famous cookies.

During the course of the year, and with many e-mails exchanged, a plan was developed to pair Francis Tuttle with Lycee le Hotoie in Amiens. Hotoie's Chef Thierry Blanet and Chef Passmark determined they could alternate teaching between them with a monthly teleconference. It was this pilot that provided Manes with a model to seek funding for an exchange project.

When Manes was awarded a grant from the French Ministry of Education, she contacted Belinda McCharen, Francis Tuttle Endowed Chair for Occupational Education Studies at Oklahoma State University, with whom she had engaged in previous conversation; the idea was to begin plans for four Oklahoma technology centers to partner with four Lycees in France. The French Lycee schools are noted for excellence in hotel and restaurant management and culinary arts. This

first international partnership was based on the pilot with Francis Tuttle.

### Oklahoma Culinary Arts Programs Think International

The four technology centers in Oklahoma with culinary programs that were ready to expand from good to exceptional with an international flair were: Francis Tuttle Technology Center in Oklahoma City; Meridian Technology Center, Stillwater; Tri County Technology Center in Bartlesville; and Tulsa Technology Center in Tulsa. Boards of education had to be convinced that such a partnership was beneficial, and a teacher and administrator from each technology center were sent to France to begin planning a yearlong project with the French Lycee.

The technology center superintendents, boards of education, and teachers all understood the potential for changing instruction and changing the opportunities for CTE students in the future. Stephanie Lemoines, of Lycee Charles de Gaulle in Compiègne, coordinated the partnering schools in France, and McCharen coordinated the Oklahoma technology centers. A date was selected



▲ (Left to right) Kara Gae Neal, superintendent of Tulsa Tech, Jean-Francois Thory and Stephanie Lemoine, both of Le Corbusier, work on their project.



▲ Linda Thomson (in white) and Donna Campbell (in black) both from Meridian Tech, are in the kitchen.



▲ Chef Bruno and one of his students.

and travel arrangements set. The Oklahomans were headed to France.

### Meeting the French Partners

The anticipation was palpable when the Oklahoma group met at the Gare du Nord train station in Paris to take the hour-long trip to Soissons. The Lycee Le Corbusier would serve as host for the initial meeting of the technology centers and Lycee schools. LeCorbusier is the largest Lycee and also has a dormitory for its resident students. The group was met with vans, smiles and bises (kisses) in the French tradition at the train station. A welcome dinner was planned to welcome the Oklahomans to France.

At the dinner meeting, Lemoines and Dominique Mallet, headmaster of Le Corbusier, greeted each technology center and its Lycee partner. The beautiful dinner was prepared by the Le Corbusier students who also served it. Being France, wine was served and was expertly matched to the dinner.

Dominique Hedont, headmaster of Lycee Hotoie, and Chef Blanet were introduced to Kay Martin, CEO and superintendent of Frances Tuttle Technology Center, Jane Vaughn, assistant superintendent, and Chef Passmark; they were paired for the continuation of their yearlong pilot project. Francis Tuttle was in for a treat with their visit to Soissons to

meet their culinary partner with whom they had been co-teaching through live interactive Web communication on several occasions for the past year. Chef Passmark and Chef Blanet had done demonstrations with students via the Web, showing different culinary techniques unique to each culture. Despite never having met each other, they

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became instant colleagues and immersed themselves in discussing their teaching techniques. Chef Passmark was trained in Sweden and was aware of the outstanding culinary education system provided in France. He said the trip was the “opportunity of a lifetime” for both him and his students.

Mallet and Jean-Francois Thory, chef des travaux at Le Corbusier, were introduced and paired with Kara Gae Neal, superintendent and CEO of Tulsa Technology Center, and Michael Yip, culinary instructor at that center.

Raymond Zakryenski, headmaster

of Lycee Charles de Gaulle, and Bruno Van der Weijden, culinary instructor at that Lycee, were introduced and paired with Linda Thomson, instructional leader, and Donna Cantrell, culinary instructor—both from Meridian Technology Center.

Finally, Dominique Cosson, headmaster of Lycee Gustave Eiffel in Reims, and Sophia Newby, English instructor at that Lycee, were paired with Tammie Carlson, director of instruction, and Scott Griffin, culinary instructor—both from Tri County Technology Center.

### Getting Down to Business

The next morning the partners departed to each school with the charge of developing a partnership project that would involve instructors and students for the next year. The goal was for the schools to engage in joint instruction and a culminating project, but also to plan for the exchange of teachers and students to visit each other sometime during the next year.

The agendas included touring each Lycee, meeting students, working in the kitchens of the Lycee schools and enjoying student presentations. They spent two days at the partner Lycee learning and working and planning. There was also time to learn about and visit a cheese production business, a chocolatier to observe how handmade chocolates are made,

and to see the wonderful cathedrals and towns in France. The meals prepared and served by the French CTE students were tres bien (excellent).

On the third day the groups traveled to Reims for the presentation of the project plans and a surprise tour of the Pommery Champagne cellars. To see the cellars dug by Romans in the fourth century was extraordinary for people from a state that is barely 100 years old. The appreciation for the French culture, history and tradition of wine and fine dining could never be taught in the way it was shown by the gracious French hosts. The projects were presented by each set of partners to all those present. The innovation and commitment to create an extraordinary model of global learning and the creative use of technology was incredible to witness.

The connections among the new partners and friends were instantaneous and quite amazing. In their presentations, Francis Tuttle and Lycee Hotoirie will continue the monthly teleconferences and co-teaching with Chef Blanet. They will expand into developing an international cookbook that would be delivered and demonstrated on CD.

Meridian Tech Center decided on a student exchange creating net buddies like “old pen pals.” The center and Lycee Charles de Gaulle will develop a cooking competition with teams comprised of

one Meridian and one Charles de Gaulle student, culminating in the winning team representing the partnership at the international cook-off held in France annually. They will also create a cookbook with best recipes from each school in both languages. Chefs from both the Lycee and technology center will conduct cooking demonstrations/lectures using Skype during the 2009-2010 school year.

Tulsa Tech Chef Yip is planning for his class to have e-mail pen pals. In addition to recipe exchanges, they intend to do joint collaboration in preparing dishes through online/real-time communication. Additional exchanges have already occurred with two friends from Soissons’ schools: Annie Collin and Celine Grenier, the English teachers/translators, spent 10 days this summer visiting Superintendent Neal and Yip, who enjoyed taking their new French partners to see the other partner school sites in Oklahoma.

For the Tri County Technology Center the French exchange with its partner Lycee Gustave Eiffel was outstanding. Gustave Eiffel’s Headmaster Cosson in collaboration with Tri County’s Carlson designed an innovative partnership focusing on teachers, students and administrators. The partnership includes: cross-curricular lesson development, team teaching, coupled with business update experiences. Both schools will utilize

video conferencing, Internet, and visits by both students and staff to continue the partnership.

### Keeping in Touch

The projects will continue during 2009-2010 with visits to Oklahoma by the French instructors and students tentatively set for fall 2009. These projects will provide the Oklahoma CTE students with exposure to another culture through food and language. Students will also be integrating social studies, foreign language, writing, presentation skills, and practice of their culinary skills through this unique project.

Oklahoma students and teachers will travel to France in spring 2010. It is the hope that these partnerships and similar projects will continue and expand into CTE areas such as hospitality, tourism, and perhaps others. The excitement and learning does not end with the students. The instructors and administrators are also really energized and are bringing French into the classrooms in these four technology centers in Oklahoma. Who knew that French would be important to Oklahoma CTE students? The CTE students in France are all engaged in learning English. In time, the French spoken with an Oklahoma accent may become more familiar to the partners.

Global exchanges such as this will help CTE students be successful in the workplace of the 21st century. Who knows, such exchanges may also create a world with a little more understanding, appreciation of culture and the proliferation of fine cuisine. ■

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