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May 4, 2007

DURHAM, N.H. -- The University of New Hampshire chapter of Pi Delta Phi, the French national honor society, recently welcomed 10 new members at its annual initiation ceremony May 3, 2007.

New initiates include Laura M. Carpenter, Winthrop, Maine; Claire M. Churchill, Bedford; Cheryl A. Debelis, Manchester; Allison G. Fricke, St. Paul, Minn.; Kerri L. Frizzell, Bedford; Jacob L. Howard, Springfield; Jacob J. B. Marvelley, South Hamilton, Mass.; Elizabeth L. Moon, Rochester; Lisa J. Mulvey, Ithaca, NY; Christina L. Sutton, Newburyport, Mass.; and honorary member David Azzi, a 1983 UNH graduate currently teaching French in a Dallas high school. Continuing members of the chapter are Sarah A. Marcoux, Stephanie L. Noble, Kevin J. Murray, Nolan P. Bonvouloir, Katherine A. Steere, and Ariel Hudson. The ceremony was conducted by Barbara T. Cooper, professor of French and faculty moderator of the chapter, which was founded in 1999.

The chapter also celebrated the successful completion of its annual cultural service project. With the money raised through its spring raffle, the chapter was able to purchase two seats at The Music Hall in Portsmouth, dedicating them to two 19th century French dramatists.

One seat recognizes playwright and novelist Alexandre Dumas père, the author of “The Three Musketeers” and “The Count of Monte Cristo.” The other seat bears the name of New Orleans-born French playwright Victor Séjour who, prior to the Civil War, moved to France where he gained a significant measure of fame. The chapter will also donate a biographical study on Séjour to the UNH library.

Both Dumas and Séjour were of mixed black and white ancestry and made notable contributions to French culture.

“The Music Hall seemed an especially appropriate place to commemorate the lives and works of these two authors since it is both a theatrical venue dating back to the 19th century and a part of Portsmouth’s Black Heritage Trail. This project allowed us to support a local cultural treasure and to highlight the talents of these French-speaking writers. We hope that patrons of The Music Hall will look for the plaques dedicating the seats to Dumas and Séjour and will want to learn more about them,” Cooper said.