

Feb. 1 King's Ball keeps New Year celebration going

By Mary McKinstry
For the Leader

Ste. Genevieve also celebrates another French tradition at the beginning of each new year. The city's annual King's Ball will be held this year on Saturday, Feb. 1, at the VFW Hall, 852 Memorial Drive.

The ball will begin at 7 p.m. Like La Guignolée, this tradition goes back more than 250 years.

Tickets for the ball are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children and students. Tables for eight to 10 people may be reserved ahead of time. Guests are invited to bring a basket of snacks, and a cash bar will be available.

Those who attend are encouraged to dress in French colonial costumes, but it is not required. The band Cash Rebates will provide music and instruction in traditional dances. Children are welcome to participate, as well as adults.

The men who attend will be offered a piece of the king's cake (La Galette des Rois), and the lucky gentleman who finds a special charm in his piece of cake will be crowned



King's cake is part of the tradition.

king of the ball. The king then will select his queen, and together they will reign over the ball. Special attendants will be selected to assist the king and queen.

Doors to the event open at 7 p.m., and the ball will begin with the singing of traditional French songs by a children's group called Les Petit Chanteurs. Guests will be introduced as they arrive, and the music and dancing will begin at 8 p.m.

Children must be accompanied by an adult, and the event is wheelchair-accessible. Proceeds from the ball benefit the Ste. Genevieve Museum. For more information or table reservations, call 573-883-2099 or email kingsball@historicstegen.org.

French settlers brou

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For some 250 years, a New Year Eve tradition has continued in Ste. Genevieve. Called La Guignolée, it involves lots of singing, dancing and playing instruments – and quite a bit of food and drink as well.

"It's a group of local citizens – musicians and singers – who get together and sing traditional French New Year's carols similar to Christmas songs, but songs for the new year," said Sandra Cabot, director of tourism for Ste. Genevieve.

Long ago, the Guignolée traveled from house to house, but these days they show up at local restaurants, taverns, assisted-living centers and other venues accompanied by several musicians playing violins and accordions. The musicians play away in the center of the group while the others sing the La Guignolée tune and march in rhythm around them.

"They sing their songs and make it merry, and then they move on to the next venue," Cabot said.

The number in the group varies, usually around 20-30, and they dress in costumes.

"The costumes can range from fairly tame to fairly outrageous," Cabot said. "Some dress as colonial residents; other might be dressed in more contemporary

The following recipe is from Mary and Gary Scheel, owners of Some Inn Time Bed and Breakfast in Ste. Genevieve. The recipe for French toast is their signature dish.

12 slices of Texas Toast bread or French bread cut in 1-inch cubes
1 1/2 cups fresh or frozen blueberries
12 eggs
12 ounces cream cheese, softened
1/2 cup vanilla yogurt
1/2 cup half and half creamer
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

Trim crust from bread and cut into 1-inch cubes. Place half in a greased 13 x 9 x 2" baking dish. Top with blueberries and remaining bread cubes. In mixing bowl, beat softened cream cheese until