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Franco-American scholar is honored

By ED GARLAND
Sunday Staff Writer 9/28/86

LEWISTON — With two generations of role models set before her, it was only natural for Professor Madeleine Giguere to play a vital role in Franco-American studies.

Action for Franco-Americans in the Northeast (ActFANE) will honor Giguere at the second Annual Franco-American Recognition Dinner today to highlight her exceptional contributions as a Franco-American working in the public sector.

ActFANE, the umbrella organization for Franco-Americans in New England and New York, last year instituted its testimonial in honor of former U.S. Rep. Norman E. D'Amours.

"I was the most surprised person in the world," Giguere said in a telephone interview about her selection this year. "I never really envisioned it as a possibility. I'm a quiet, retiring kind of



Madeleine Giguere

person."

Giguere's lengthy list of credits suggests otherwise. A native and current resident of Lewiston, she obtained her bachelor of arts degree from the College of New Rochelle, her master's degree from Fordham University, and a

master of philosophy degree from Columbia University. Giguere is currently a professor of sociology at the University of Southern Maine. Her many affiliations include the Northeast Council for Quebec Studies and the American Sociological Association.

Giguere is widely recognized as a pioneer in her demographic research on Franco-Americans. The testimonial will raise funds for research scholarships to be administered by the Franco-American Center at the Orono campus.

Giguere attributes her awareness of the Franco-American cause to her parents and grandparents, all of whom contributed to the local community in one way or another.

"My parents were conscious of the fact they were Franco-American," Giguere said. "My father was on the school board and the draft board. . . He did it out of a sense of duty to the community."

Giguere's mother was also active during World War II as the county co-chairman for civil defense. Both of Giguere's grandfathers were active in politics.

"I had these models before me but they were expressed in a different way," she said.

Whereas her forebears involved themselves in a community-oriented sense, Giguere affected Franco-Americans collectively with her research.

"Because of her research and writing in sociology, she has promoted Franco-American causes throughout the country," Paul Pare, executive director of ActFANE, said.

Pare described Franco-Americans as a very "private people who don't like to shake the boat." The idea of the dinner, he said, is new and revolutionary for the Franco-American tradition.

"In the past we have usually honored monseigneurs with one

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foot in the grave instead of recognizing younger people for their contributions," Pare said.

An activist in the women's movement, Giguere found herself withdrawing from the women's field during the 70s and devoting more time to Franco-American studies.

"I really started focusing on research and was successful because no one else was doing it," Giguere said. "During the 70s and 80s there wasn't a month going by without people looking for information on Franco-Amer-

ican data."

Giguere's statistics were in great demand when they were published in 1982.

Her demographic research provided for the first time scientifically-sound information on the numerical strength of Franco-Americans. "The statistics show discrimination, a disadvantage in terms of education, and family characteristics for those interested in family studies," Giguere said. "I have never thought the French were discriminated in Maine as much as,

for example, the Hispanics in the southwestern United States, but there is still some differential treatment that still exists. If you ask anybody to tell you a French joke you'll see some discrimination still exists. Those are remnants of prejudice that was once very intense. Jokes are a form of social control."

In the future, Giguere plans to study language maintenance in Maine among the French-speaking. She also hopes to trace the evolution of voluntary organizations in Franco-American life.