

French connection picks up the pace

The French language and cultural group, Alliance Francaise de Nelson, plans to show a series of French films starting later this month.

Secretary Caroline Pizanti says the event will be held at Fern Lodge in the Prince Albert.

It begins with a screening of *Le Petit Lieutenant* directed by Xavier Beauvois at 8pm on Friday July 25.

This is followed by a documentary about Cuba, *Le Rideau de Sucre* by Camila Guzman at 5.30pm on July 26 and *Jules et Jim* directed by Francois Truffaut at 8pm on the same day.

Tickets are \$10 and there is a seating capacity of 40.

The film festival continues with three lunchtime French films screening at the Suter.

These are *La Dance et Degas* on July 31, *Chagall a la Russie* on August 7 and *Buren et le Guggenheim* on August 14. The films start at 12.10pm.

President Grant McAlpine says the group has been given some money from the French Embassy in Wellington to put on the films.

It is an active period for the 80-member group which has just launched a website, organises French classes at Victory



WEEKLY MEETING: President Grant McAlpine and secretary Caroline Pizanti at Alliance Francaise de Nelson's weekly meeting at Cafe Affair. Photo 189609 Phil Barnes

School and plans a group dinner with a French theme at the Jaycee room at Founders Heritage Park on July 12 to mark Bastille Day.

"It's a pot luck celebration.

"Most people will bring along a French dish and there are some very talented cooks amongst us.

"We then have a vote for the best main course and the best dessert."

Grant says the Nelson branch was formed in 1990 and has grown a lot since then.

It is one of 700 alliances around the world and 10 in New Zealand which are dedicated to encourag-

ing interest in the French language, culture and literature.

Members meet each Friday at Cafe Affair at the top of Trafalgar St between 4pm and 6pm.

The group also organises a monthly breakfast which it holds at different cafes around town.

Grant says Alliance Francaise caters for people wanting to practise their French irrespective of whether they are beginners or native speakers.

"We tend to split into groups at respective levels.

"We have quite a few native speakers which helps with the language.

"And for people who

have not been exposed to native French it's good just to listen.

"It's quite casual and relaxed," he adds - "people don't have to talk."

He says 20 percent of the Nelson group are native speakers with members coming from France, Belgium, Switzerland and some French Canadians.

"We also have Dutch and English people who speak it pretty well as a result of spending time in Europe in the past."

Grant says games' evenings, including French vocabulary games, are held at members houses.

There is a library with videos and DVDs and a monthly newsletter.

The French lessons Alliance Francaise organises at Victory School are also proving popular.

"We now have three classes with children in an age range of five to 11 and 10 to 12 kids in each class," Grant says.

"Our vice-president - Anne Wheeler - is from Belgium and is a wonderful teacher."

Another project the group organises each August is a French speaking competition for secondary schools called *Concours Oral*.

Sixty-three pupils from years nine to 13 took part last year.

"There is a carrot with this competition as the first two year 12 students from each district go into a lottery for a trip to Noumea and the top two year 13 students go forward to a further stage of the national competition where the top prize is a trip to Paris," Grant says.

For further information log in on the Alliance Francaise website, www.af-nelson-tasman-org.nz.