

We must never forget our ancestors . . . We must keep our culture strong, we must invest in our culture's future. - J.M. (Oklahoma City, OK)



# CREOLE · HERITAGE CENTER AT NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

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Newsletter

## Our Vision

To revitalize, mobilize, and empower, for global recognition, Creole people and their contributions.

## Our Mission

To preserve, educate, and advocate the value and significance of the vibrant Louisiana Creole people and their culture.

2024 was a year of new looks, preservation enhancements, and community connections. We hope you enjoy this look back at all the CHC accomplished in 2024 and a glimpse into what we have planned in 2025 to continue achieving our mission.

- Dr. Kent Peacock, Director & Markita Hamilton-Small & Judy Rachal, Clerks



CHC Staff & Volunteers at St. Augustine Catholic Church of Isle Brevelle's Annual Creole Festival (Oct 24)

## NEW LOOKS

An unmistakable change in 2024 was the adoption of a new logo and branding for the CHC. At events you can't miss our use of purple, a color that echoes our home institution, Northwestern State University of Louisiana. Our new logo reflects the importance of family to Louisiana Creoles and the history and work of the CHC.

Another new look in 2024 was the hiring of a new part-time clerk, Ms. Judy Rachal of Cloutierville. Chances are if you call the Center or see us at an event, Judy will be the one to help you!

For 2025 we have updated the language of our membership levels so they are no longer tied to one's age or family size. Instead, you can support the CHC and be a part of the community dedicated to empowering Louisiana Creoles & preserving their culture at the financial level that is best for you!

## COMMUNITY & EVENTS

In 2024 we traveled to Grand Coteau, Isle Brevelle, and Vermilionville to participate in events celebrating Creole culture hosted by newer and established Creole organizations. We welcomed attendees of two family reunions, the Chelettes and Metoyers, to explore our exhibits at our home in Natchitoches. Chef Sheri Raleigh & OperaCréole shared their talents on major aspects of Creole culture at CHC-sponsored events. Your support helped us become sponsors of several Creole-connected organizations and Ms. Judy represented the CHC at several of their membership meetings.

Our efforts to connect with communities in 2025 will take us to many of the same locations, but also Jeanerette and Houston, TX. We hope to welcome more families to view our exhibits, as well as develop new ones on the CHC's history and Louisiana's Creole communities.



Top: CHC Staff at Natchitoches-NSU Folk Festival (July 24); R: CHC Exhibit at Creole Culture Day in Vermilionville (June 24)



## COMMUNICATIONS

In April the CHC purchased a Constant Contact subscription and we began monthly eNewsletters to all our supporters and targeted efforts to connect with new supporters and event attendees. Ms. Markita continues to oversee our Facebook and Instagram accounts, sharing not just CHC news, but events and resources of interest from Creoles and Creole organizations around Louisiana and beyond.

We will continue these efforts to keep our supporters informed throughout 2025, so make sure you've subscribed to our e-mail list and follow us on social media!

## RESOURCE SERVICES

Access, Cataloging, & Preservation were the words of 2024. The purchase of professional archive quality materials allowed us to begin better organization and protection of our holdings on Louisiana Creoles' genealogies and traditions for future generations. To improve access to our resources, we began a CHC YouTube channel and free, digital access to some of the CHC's past publications is now available on our website, too!

We continued to grow our National Creole Family Database through over 20 updates from our supporters and help from Phyllis Pitre Lastrapes, a Certified Genealogist based in Baton Rouge. Our Resource Library expanded, too, adding over 80 new books on Louisiana Creole history, genealogy, and culture.

The summer months saw Sara Rebstock, who is pursuing a MA in Library & Information Science, tackle the cataloging and digitization of an important collection of about two linear feet, while a professional archivist helped us develop a draft Collections Management Plan. Our director, Dr. Peacock, took a course with the American Association for State & Local History on preserving collections to learn how to protect our holdings against everything from light to pests & water.

Access, Cataloging, & Preservation will again be a focus of 2025. We will continue implementing our new plans for managing and preserving our collections, while also hopefully improving accessibility of them for in person visitors and from afar.



Audio-Visual Holdings being preserved and organized in the CHC's Resource Library - A project to be finished in 2025! (Fall 24)



Storyteller Rosa Ashby-Metoyer performing for attendees at our summer camp event with Cane River Creole National Historic Park in June 24 (Used with permission from CRCNHP)

## EDUCATION

2024 saw the beginnings of updates to lesson plans and informational resources on Louisiana Creoles for K-12 educators. With the help of Gail Metoyer Jones, we communed with local teachers and administrators to learn about recent updates to Louisiana's social studies standards and best practices so teachers will find it easy to utilize our resources.

We hope to share examples of our updated resources in June 2025 at a Teacher Institute for Louisiana 6-8th grade teachers, hosted in partnership with Cane River Creole National Historical Park & Cane River National Heritage Area. Additional plans include a new online interface for accessing these and all future materials for teachers and learners of all ages!

## INFRASTRUCTURE

CHC staff are thankful for a new donor management software and new master filing system of CHC records. A great thanks goes to Rhonda Gauthier who returned to the CHC to take on hours of reviewing and sorting files of our 25+ year history. Efficient access to accurate records will help us obtain funding from grantors and sponsors in 2025, as well as improve trust with all our supporters.

Helping us throughout all of our work in 2024 were the 12 members of our Advisory Council. The Council will again meet four times in 2025 and is excited for the hopeful addition of three new members.



The CHC started an online store with CHC-branded products. Popular Creole surnames and communities T-shirts will be back in 2025!

**Thank you to our 2024 Members, Community Sponsors, & Creole Champions!!**

161 Total Members

Across 21 states & 2 countries

### Community Sponsors

#### Gold Level



#### Silver Level

#### Bronze Level



### Creole Champions

|                            |                                |                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Anonymous (2)              | Kathleen Balthazar             | James & Sandra Billeaudeau   |
| Thomas & Yolanda Carroll   | Winston & Barbara DeCuir       | Bervick & Cynthia Deculus    |
| Lillie & Daphne Delphin    | Thomas A. & Shirley M. Delphin | Wilfred Delphin              |
| Michael & Kathleen Johnson | Kelly McCrone & Kevin Peacock  | Paulette Metoyer             |
| Stephen Metoyer            | Frank Moran, Jr. III           | Rev. Richard & Janis Peacock |
| Jamie Prudhomme Chilson    | Gina Puls                      | Christie Rachal & Family     |
| Denis Rachal               | Joyce Rideau Metoyer           | Elizabeth Shumate            |
| Freeman Wiley              |                                |                              |

Updated 12/10/2024