

Hyde gets grants for new study

By JAMES KILEY
Bath-Brunswick Bureau

BATH — The Hyde School has been awarded two grants to develop a new Franco-American Studies Program.

And officials at the private high school believe the new program will not only bring another innovative method of teaching to the students but improve the awareness of Maine residents of their Franco-American heritage.

The school has received a \$44,703 federal grant from the Ethnic Heritage Studies Program which it will couple with a \$30,000 grant from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation of Morristown, N.J., to get the program off the ground.

"Actually we've been working on it for a year and a half," said James Searles, a Hyde faculty member who is the new program's director.

"We've done a lot of work that was included in applying for the grant," Searles said, "but this is the first time we'll actually have the funding to get the program rolling."

The director said the novel program will have many facets, including student meetings with elderly Franco-American residents throughout the state, interviewing them and using this information to develop a stage production on the state's Franco-American heritage.

"What we really want to do in this program is two major things. The first is to write a book about the personal stories of the Franco-American residents in the state.

"Secondly we're going to write a musical/dramatic dance show of 30 minutes in length. We'll put on stage productions and videotape it for television. We're looking to accomplish this around April of 1980," Searles said.

"The most important reason why I think we got the grants is because we stressed we thought this program could make both the Franco-American and the non-Franco-



Allse Blais of Augusta, one of those interviewed in conjunction with the Hyde program. (Best photo)

American residents of the state more aware of the Franco-American culture," he said.

"Another exciting concept in this program will be working with the community, using it as a resource. What we're doing will be an extension of our academic side, we'll be getting into community service.

"I have a class of about 24 students and we've already been interviewing some Franco-American citizens with the Cushnoc Club in Augusta. We'll do more interviews with residents from other parts of the state and then we'll try to portray the general themes which we get from the people's stories in our stage production," Searles added.

"The students at Hyde are very excited about the program and the senior citizens are ecstatic. They hope the program can help keep their heritage alive in the state," Searles said.

"As a teacher I, too, am excited. We're hoping that this whole project will stimulate teachers throughout the state to include the study of the Franco-American culture when they are teaching the French language.

"At Hyde we will use this information to restructure our teaching of foreign languages. I think it's going to be a really innovative way to teach the students," Searles said.

HYDE SCHOOL. BATH.

The Hyde School is developing a new Franco-American Studies Program to improve the awareness of Maine residents of their Franco-American heritage.

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