

Celebrating the Maid of Orleans

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You can shout “Joyeux anniversaire, Jeanne d’Arc!,” “Vive la France!” or “Happy Mardi Gras!” as the Krewe de Jeanne d’Arc ushers in the 2016 Carnival season on Wednesday, Jan. 6, at 7 p.m. This iconic golden statue located in the French Quarter honors the parade’s namesake.

A golden beacon welcoming patrons to the French Market, the Joan of Arc statue located at 933 Decatur St. in the French Quarter depicts the armored military heroine atop horseback. A gleaming gift from France in the 1950s, the monument commemorates this city’s French heritage and unwavering resilience. On Wednesday, Jan. 6, at 7 p.m., the [Krewe de Jeanne d’Arc](#) will celebrate the birthday of New Orleans’ unofficial patron saint and kick off Carnival season.

The family-friendly krewe marches annually on Twelfth Night, which signals Mardi Gras’ long-awaited return.

“Joan was born in 1412, so she would be 604 now. Our parade is just eight years old, comparatively,” says Amy Kirk Duvoisin, president of the Joan of Arc Project.

“We have approximately 300 people marching,” says Kirk Duvoisin.

Krewe members include Elaine Wright, director of global programs at the Tulane University School of Social Work, and Vicki Mayer, Tulane professor of communication.

Kirk Duvoisin founded the grassroots walking parade in 2008 after reading several books about the heroine's life and recognizing that her birthday landed on the serendipitous date. To gain support, Kirk Duvoisin created a [blog](#) and collaborated with the French Quarter business association.

"I funded the first parade on my own dime. As word spread, more and more people asked to join," says Kirk Duvoisin.

Set in Joan's time of 1400s France, the procession features period costumes, characters on horseback, handmade throws and a massive king cake.

"We tell her story in order, so you see a birthday cake with jesters at the beginning, then a section representing her childhood in Domremy [France] and then [her transition] from soldier to saint. Some of the throws, like our playing cards, give info on the characters, time and place. We're really a moving theater piece in the French Quarter," says Kirk Duvoisin.

Operating as a nonprofit, the krewe also provides ways to celebrate Joan's legacy throughout the year, including the [Joan of Arc library project](#) directed by Amanda Helm and an annual conference called The Salon de Jeanne d'Arc.

Once I read that she was born on Twelfth Night, the idea of a parade was born.
Amy Kirk Duvoisin, president of the Joan of Arc Project