



SAVE THE DATE  
MARCH 8, 2014

# MARDI GRAS Gala

SPOTLIGHT 29

## 2nd Annual Middle School

### AWARD PROGRAM

All proceeds go towards the annual...

"Coachella East Middle Schools Award Program"

## MARDI GRAS HISTORY

### *Origins*

The history of Mardi Gras began long before Europeans set foot in the new World. In mid February the ancient Romans celebrated the *Lupercalia*, a circus like festable not intirely unlike the Mardi Gras we are familiar with today. When Rome embraced Christianity, the early Church fathers decided it was better to incorporate certain aspects of pagan rituals into the new faith rather attempt to abolish them altogether. Carnival became a period of abandon and merriment that preceded the penance of Lent, thus giving a Christian interpretation to the ancient custom.

Mardi Gras came to America in 1699 with the French explorer Iberville. Mardi Gras had been celebrated in Paris since the Middle Ages, where it was a major holiday. Iberville sailed into the Gulf of Mexico, from where he launched an expedition up the Mississippi River. On March 3, 1699, Iberville had set up a camp on the west bank of the river about 60 miles south of where New Orleans is today. This was the day Mardi Gras was being celebrated in France. In honor of this important day, Iberville named the site *Point du Mardi Gras*.

### *The late Eighteenth Century*

During the late 1700's pre-Lenten masked balls and festivals were common in New Orleans while it was under French rule. However when new Orleans came under the Spanish rule the custom was banned. In 1803 New Orleans came under the U.S. flag. The prohibition against masked festivals continued until 1823 when the Creole populace convinced the governor to permit balls. In 1827 street masking was again legalized. During the early 1800's public celebrations of Mardi Gras centered around maskers on foot, in carriages and on horseback. The first documented parade occurred in 1837.

Article written by Jim Davis

President: Laurie Holk  
Co-Chairman George J. Jones  
Co-Chairman Manny Rios



Rotary Club of COACHELLA EAST

Founded June 11, 2009 A 501 (c)(3) Organization  
PO Box 1167 Coachella, CA 92236  
Tax I.D. # 27-0474277

