

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 5 JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2010

the Inside Scoop ...of OJJ

Mission:

The Office of Juvenile Justice protects the public by providing safe and effective individualized services to youth, who will become productive, law-abiding citizens.



Dr. Mary L. Livers, Deputy Secretary

Congratulations to **Judge Patricia Koch** of the Rapides Parish District Court in Alexandria, one of four leaders in Models for Change sites across the nation, who recently received the 2009 Champions for Change Award in recognition of exceptional contributions to juvenile justice.

We ended 2009 with a wonderful Christmas party for all staff, and we were delighted that around 60 OJJ staff attended. I look forward to seeing even more staff come out to kick up their heels for the Christmas party this year.

We begin the new year with the theme of change and challenge. Change is inevitable in every agency, family, organization and business, and it's something we all have to get used to.

As for challenge, well, that's a given on a daily basis at OJJ. The current challenge is the state's fiscal crisis and the budget shortfall in the current fiscal year and the new one that begins this summer. As I know you are aware, like every agency, OJJ has put measures into place to mitigate the impact of the deficit and to minimize the impact on services to adjudicated youth in our care and custody.

The challenges we face today will bring about major changes and we will all have to make sacrifices. Many of these measures and some changes will be difficult, but I am sure that OJJ is up to the challenge, as long as we focus on our mission and we strive to provide a positive example to our youth. We need to model appropriate behavior in the face of hardship and disappointment, and demonstrate to the youth in our care that these things are a part of life that must be overcome with dignity and grace.

Change is in the air. I know you are up to the challenge.

"Doc" Dr. Mary L. Livers

Soul Food

An inspirational column by OJJ staff



Swanson Chaplain

Ricky James

A Lift out of the Dungeon

Everybody needs a lift out of the dungeon every now and then. And every child of the Creator will find themselves in a dungeon, sooner or later, if they do what He says. Scripture declares that a man, a prophet named Jeremiah, was cast into a dungeon for proclaiming the truth, the Word. But the Creator delivered him out of the dungeon. According to studies, a dungeon was a cold, wet, dark, lonely and muddy place. And when Jeremiah was cast into the dungeon, that cold, wet, muddy, lonely and dark place, he sank down in the mud up to his neck, until he could barely move his arms above his head. It seemed like there was no way possible for him to get out. But the Creator sent an Ethiopian man named Ebedmelech to petition the King on Jeremiah's behalf. The King granted the request. And the man gathered old rags, and other men to help him lift Jeremiah out of the dungeon. And sometime in our short lives here on earth, we are going to experience some periods in our life where we will be up to our neck in places, situations, and circumstances, until we feel like we can barely move, all alone, and can't get out. It is during those times that the Creator will send someone to give you a lift out of your dungeon. I don't know what your dungeon is, but maybe it's when you are trying to do the right thing, and people turn cold toward you. Maybe it's when you try hard to have a

closer relationship with the Creator by attending studies, services, and prayer meetings, but you always seems to get bogged down with others things. I just want to tell you that He will always have someone around to lift you out of your dungeon. And in your dungeon, you might feel cold, wet, lonely, and dark, and things might get muddy, but don't give up, keep trusting in the Creator. Remember we were once in a dungeon, but He sent His Son to rescue us, to deliver us from our sins, and to save us.

THE DAILY MOTIVATOR

Put discouragement behind you

Just as quickly and easily as you can become discouraged, you can let go of that discouragement. The only power that discouragement has, is the power you give it.

Though the challenges are great, you are greater. For you can act and learn and adapt, and act again with even more effectiveness.

If you feel yourself sinking into the false comfort of discouragement, choose instead to stand up. Boldly take a few steps forward, lovingly recall your deepest purposes and your most treasured dreams, and put that discouragement behind you.

Though there is always injustice in the world, there is always even more opportunity to make a positive difference. Though the challenges keep appearing, in each challenge is the chance to create new positive value.

You can decide how your life will be. And you have the power to make it so.

This is your moment to pick your head up, put a smile on your face, and with a quickness and determination in your step, move forward. Look toward your best possibilities, for you are here now to achieve great things.

-- Ralph Marston

Staff Spotlight

Spotlight on...

...Andrae Ford, Probation and Parole Supervisor Thibodaux Regional Office

Back in 1990, 25-year old Thibodaux native Andrae (Andi) Ford was looking for a job close to home, and someone encouraged her to take a Civil Service test. With an accounting degree from Nicholls State University, she never envisioned the career path she would embark upon.

Now almost 20 years later, Andi is a Probation and Parole Supervisor and says she grew up with OJJ. "OJJ is very fortunate to have an employee like Andi," said Regional Manager Angela Koenig. "She has been with the agency for 19 years and is extremely dedicated and hard working. She is committed to the youth and families we serve and has always been a team player. When asked to perform or assist with a task Andi never refuses. She is dependable, loyal and very focused. Working with Andi is a pleasure."

Andi spent 11 years in the field as a Probation and Parole Officer, five years in placement, and has been a supervisor for three years. "I loved going to court," Andi says of her years as a PPO. "I had the best judge and staff you could hope for in the Thibodaux City Court. The court was like a family. We worked together for the best interest of the kids. The court and the District Attorney's office accepted our recommendations for the most part. The Thibodaux Regional Office is fortunate to have those relationships."

Andi chalks up her success to her desire to meet her obligations and to do what's right. "I have a strong sense of responsibility," she noted. "It's important to be a responsible employee and parent, and it's also important to impart that to our youth."

"In the field it is sometimes difficult to get through to the youth," Andi continued. "We try to teach them that life does not have to be so hard – it's not an easy concept for a lot of our kids. They don't have the support system that we have had, and it's not an easy road for them. Some kids never had a chance. Family support makes all the difference in our kids' success."

One of the things that Andi strives to impart to her staff is that we have to be positive and realize that we are all in the same boat. "Everyone has to realize that we have to get the job done for the benefit of the whole office and the agency. We come to work every day and do what needs to be done, regardless of changes going on – and we have had a lot of change over the past couple of years. It's all about taking care of the kids."

"If we had unlimited resources and I could have anything I wished for, it would be more staff," Andi said. "It takes staff to deal with families and to go above and beyond what is required. The changes with our kids will come in when additional social services are available to assist families. With more resources to reach families, we would have a better outcome for the kids. If there are no changes at home with families, and there is no desire for change, we will not see as much success with our youth. In our area some families are resistant to change and there is a lot of complacency. It's frustrating to work with families who are unwilling to change or who are not amenable to services."

"We see kids who live really poor lives," Andi continued. "That quality of life is normal to them. The difference is in their perception. They often don't recognize how serious their situation is - while they are trying to survive, the quality of life is not relevant to their lives. Our job is not to judge, but to help. We should not have the attitude that everyone should want to live like we do. We need to respect the fact that people are often content with their lives and not interfere with families' lives if it's not necessary. Sometimes that's

difficult for a PPO to deal with, and of course some cases are more difficult than others.”

Married to Chris Ford, a financial applications analyst at Thibodaux Regional Hospital, Andi and Chris have two children, 17 year old daughter Spenser, and 13 year old son Parker. “We are all about our children and we never miss a game,” Andi says. “Nights and weekends, we spend following the kids’ activities. Most of my annual leave is spent on their activities,” she said. Spenser is a cheerleader and member of the track and cross country teams, while Parker plays football and basketball. Both attend E.D. White Catholic School in Thibodaux.

“Retail therapy is the best therapy for me,” Andi said with a laugh. “Recreational shopping is what I do for fun. I’m a clothes horse, and I love accessories. Oh, and we eat out a lot – there’s no time to cook when we are always out at games with kids, so we have to stop at restaurants.”

Whether it’s working with client kids by day or spending time with her own children, Andi Ford found her niche. It’s one she never imagined all those years ago with a newly minted accounting degree. OJJ is fortunate to be able to count on such a dedicated employee for whom meeting the mission is first priority, and second nature.

Transitions

Comings and Goings.....welcome to new members of the OJJ family.

Jetson Center for Youth

Marcia Booker, Social Services Counselor 2
Ramona Garror, Corrections Cadet
Gloria Goss, Corrections Sergeant
Eddie Holladay, Jr., Corrections Cadet
Lashonda Lang, Social Services Counselor 2
William Lapo, Corrections Cadet
Burrel Robinson, Corrections Sergeant
Troyce Smith, Corrections Cadet

Monroe

Jeremy Fox, Probation/Parole Officer 1

PROMOTIONS

Central Office

Jason Williams, IT TECH Support Spec. 1

Swanson

Hulon Sanson, Corrections Major

Hammond

Matthew Bauer, Probation/Parole Officer 3

REALLOCATIONS

Jetson Center for Youth

Cherita Irvin, Professional Counselor 1

Tonga Bryant, Social Services Counselor 3

Scarlette Pryer, Social Services Counselor 4

RETIREMENTS

Monroe

Brenda Dupriest, Adm. Coordinator 3, 29 years of service

Donald Hamler, Probation/Parole Officer, 19 years of service

New Orleans

Janet Dauphin, Probation/Parole Officer 3, 30 years of service

SUCCESS!

As often as we receive stories about our youth overcoming adversity and the situations they find themselves in, we will print them in *The Inside Scoop...of OJJ*. Please keep the good news coming!

Hello, my name is **Gary Hunter**. I am a probation officer in the Monroe OJJ. One of my many duties is to work 4th Judicial District Juvenile Drug Court in Ouachita Parish. We were honored to have a graduation on January 11, following Drug Court, in the

Court room waiting area. The purpose of this special event was to recognize Dillon Langley's successful completion of the program. The youth was dressed in a black cap and gown. A sample of graduation march music was played, followed by an invocation by a local bishop. Dillon was presented a certificate from the Honorable Judge Sharon Marchman, with comments from a ULM student therapist, an assistant district attorney, a case manager, probation officers, his mother and others. Dillon expressed how everyone had been such a big help to him. This is a clear example of OJJ embracing partnerships with families and communities to direct a life toward responsible citizenship. There are no words to describe the smiles of the youth, his mother and family. We also enjoyed cookies, punch and fellowship with other participants in the program. It was very rewarding to us all.

Thanks for letting me share this story of success.

Gary Hunter

Alexandria Regional Office

Condolences

PPO3 Lori Johnson's, grandfather passed away in December. Please keep Lori and her family in your thoughts and prayers.

PPO3 Donna Desoto and the Avoyelles Teen Court sponsored a needy family this past Christmas. Donna was able to work with Office of Family Support and obtained a needy family for the Teen Court to sponsor for Christmas. The family consisted of a mother, a five year old boy and a five month old baby girl. Youth that participate in Teen Court as volunteers donated Christmas presents and helped with wrapping all of the gifts. At the end of the Teen Court session held in December, the case worker from Office of Family Support brought the family to the court house in order to celebrate the

occasion. The Marksville City Police assisted by donating a tri-cycle that had been refurbished by the Cottonport State Prison. Santa Claus also made a special appearance as well to help celebrate the occasion. This was truly a great opportunity to fill your heart with joy, sharing with those in need.



Teen Robert Harris sings a solo accompanied by the Christian Worship Center choir at a rehearsal for "A Soulful Christmas."

One of our own, **Robert Harris**, below, sings a solo accompanied by the Christian Worship Center choir at a rehearsal for "Soulful Christmas." Robert was part of the City of Alexandria's 12 Nights

of Christmas celebration. The program featured arrangements of favorite traditional and contemporary Christmas songs. These songs take a soulful, occasionally jazzy approach to the classic holiday tunes.

Destiny Now Youth Attend Summit



2009 Summit participants from Destiny Now, Inc. Located in Alexandria, LA.

In November **Geneva Burrell**, Executive Director of Destiny Now, Inc. along with four OJJ youth, were guests at the first annual Women Empowering Nations Summit in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Girls ages 14-16 were involved in workshops that focused on self-esteem, relationships, and body image. Women Empowering Nations is dedicated to maintaining influential educational programming for girls and women that fosters a spirit of inquiry, intellectual independence and enthusiasm for learning.

Staff celebrated Christmas with gumbo and exchanging of gifts. We were pleased to have guests join us for our Christmas dinner, **Monique Lacour**, of Natchitoches OJJ, and **Mrs. Geneva Burrell** and her husband, with Destiny Now.

Baton Rouge Regional Office

Congratulations

PPO Keondra Riley was chosen Probation Officer of the Month!

Baton Rouge OJJ has been busy with a number of training sessions recently, including Electrical Safety; Drug Free Workplace/Safety Topic: Ethics, Boundaries; Sexual Harrassment; Violence Free Workplace; Cultural Diversity; Return to Work; Communication Skills; Domestic Violence: Impact on a Violence Free Workplace and Blood Borne Pathogens.

Christmas at Baton Rouge OJJ

This Christmas, Baton Rouge OJJ decided to pool together our resources and donate our would be Christmas gifts to each other, to the Toys for Tots drive, spearheaded by our very own **PPO Stephanie Krygowski**. The toy drive included toys and other gifts for kids ages 0 - 17. We wanted to make sure everyone was accounted for so we included items for teens as well as tots. We also, donated food items to prepare food baskets for our needy families. **SSC Anderson** and **SSC Yolanda Latimer** always remind us of the less fortunate and together they help us navigate some much needed items into the lives of a few of the families we serve. Thanks for keeping us on track, ladies! Although we forfeited our gifts and toys, we did not forfeit our fun. Back at the office we celebrated Christmas by hosting our first ever, Door Decorating Contest. We each decorated our doors and hallways with the spirit of Christmas. We had more fun decorating than we would have had unwrapping gifts. Together we witnessed and experienced team-

work at it's finest. Needless to say our office was filled with the Christmas Spirit. Special thanks to **DAS Carolyn Lewis** and **PM Melba Oubre**, for judging our artistic expressions of Christmas.



Food baskets for our needy families.



The Christmas door displays of Baton Rouge OJJ.



Bridge City Center for Youth

Judges Tour BCCY and Meet Youth

A large contingent of juvenile judges visited Bridge City and even held a training session while there. The judges and other dignitaries toured the campus and visited dorms, engaging youth and staff in conversation and observing some of the La Mod processes. They also visited **Chef Ron Sonnier and his Culinary Arts class**, where youth were baking their famous cookies and serving them hot from the oven. They even created a little recipe book with directions for making some of their most popular treats.



Culinary Arts students display their skills for the judges touring BCCY.

The BCCY committee who worked very hard to assure a successful tour for the judges included: **State Director John Anderson, Deputy Director Michael Gaines, Asst. Director Ricky Wright, Ad. Pro. Dir. Cassandra Washington; Adm. Asst. Sharonda Smith, ACA Compliance Officer Cherise Gougisha, LA Mod Coordinator Darvonya Smith, Major Robert Scott, Chef Ronald Sonnier and his students, Staff Development Coordinator Julie LaRose, Principal Dorean Phoenix, Group Leaders Emily Williams, Charmaine Jones and Patrick Reilly, and Youth Ambassadors Tyrone S., Jarvis D., Dejon M. and Terrence D.**



Juvenile Judges and dignitaries visit BCCY.

Youth Attend Hornets Game

Swoooooosh! was all that was heard during the Hornets game against the Toronto Raptors in November. **Youths Joseph G., Nicholus J., Derrick S., Patrick H. and Kody G.** from Pride and Hope dormitories went to the New Orleans Arena accompanied by **PM Rashied Cormier, DL Keith Joseph, CM Amanda Stokes, YCOs Casby and Gasquet** and all had a wonderful time. The youth were well behaved and demonstrated the ability to conduct themselves as well-mannered young men in public. Although the Hornets lost, Hornets 90- Raptors 107, the young men had a great time and appreciated the incentive.

Youth Visit the New Orleans Aquarium

In November **Youths Cesar A., Zachary H., Alfred S., Thaddeus N., and Eric N.** from Justice Dorm visited the Aquarium of the Americas. The youth enjoyed themselves and were very interested viewing all the attractions. "The youths had a good time and were well behaved," said **Major Robert Scott.**

"Not only did they display a positive demeanor but they got a chance to experience the quality of family and how they get together and do family things", said **Lt. Evans.** To show appreciation, one of the youth gave a special thanks to Lt. Evans for taking the time out to show him a different life setting.

Central Office

Congratulations

Program Manager Katie Kirkpatrick and her fiance' **Todd Justice** plan an April wedding.

Diana Williamson Honored for Earning CPTP Certificate



Deputy Commissioner of Administration **Barbara Goodson**, left, congratulates **Policy Planner Diana Williamson** on earning the CPTP Professional Certificate. Diana completed professional development courses on best practices, ethics and effective interviewing techniques, followed by a tough three-day written and oral exam. She was honored at a graduation ceremony held by the Comprehensive Public Training Program.



Angela Bridgewater, center is congratulated by DAS Carolyn Lewis, left, and Dr. Livers, right, for having been chosen First Quarter Employee of the Quarter.

Elaine Buzbee Receives Prestigious Award

Procurement Specialist Elaine Buzbee recently received an award as Member of the Year from the Louisiana chapter of the national professional organization, NGIP, the National Institute of Government Purchasing. Elaine is a Certified Professional Public Buyer, a prestigious national certification.



Elaine Buzbee

Condolences

Title 1 Director James Ed Green recently lost his mother. Please keep Ed and his family in your thoughts and prayers.

Central Office adopted two families for the Christmas Holidays

Staff went all out to help two needy families have a joyful Christmas. Two families were adopted and staff donated money toward the purchase of gifts.

We adopted a family in Pointe Coupee Parish that is in extreme poverty. The mother is unable to work due to ongoing chemotherapy treatments and can only provide the basics for the household. The children are ages 17, 15, 13, and 12. Her son, J. is in our system.

We also adopted the Michaels Family, **Nykisha Franklin's** relatives. The mother, aged 34, suffered from diabetes and passed away just before Christmas. Her children are ages 13, 9, 4 and 1.

“Because of your generous contributions to our adopted families we aided in helping them have a great Christmas, **Dr. Livers** said. “The shopping committee were able to shop til they dropped. **Shaeki Shanklin** was able to help save money because she is the queen of coupons.” *(she even had a coupon for Burger King when they stopped for lunch)*. Some items that were purchased for one and/or both families are as follows:

- Outfits for each family member
- Board games
- Scooters were donated by an employee
- Monogrammed blankets were donated by an employee
- Attire for the mother
- A watch
- A television
- DVD Player
- MP3 Players
- Bedding
- Wal-Mart Gift Cards
- Toys

For all of you who donated, God bless you!



Shaeki Shanklin, Nita Franklin-Shanklin, Dr. Mary Livers, Director of Education Kim Mims and Human Resources Director Gwen Jones with a few of the gifts for our adopted families.

We Pull Together to Help One of Our Own

Right before Christmas, we received news that Baton Rouge OJJ PPO **Brandon Woods**, lost everything in an apartment fire. Amazingly, Brandon was at work the next morning,

getting the job done. Brandon and his girlfriend Aricieon have a small baby. Their apartment was below the one that caught fire, but water damage destroyed everything in their home.

Central Office staff worked together with Baton Rouge OJJ to help provide Brandon and his family with furniture, clothing and necessities for their new apartment. When two Baton Rouge OJJ staff arrived to pick up and deliver the gifts to our adopted families, we discovered that one of them was **PPO Brandon Woods**. He helped load the car (to the roof inside and we stuffed the trunk) and was leaving when we realized who he was. Although he lost everything, he was helping other families to have a good Christmas holiday. Thanks to Baton Rouge OJJ **Social Worker Jennifer Anderson** and **Brandon Woods** for delivering the carload of gifts.



Shaeki Shanklin, BR OJJ Social Worker Jennifer Anderson, Student Worker Brittany Bricker, PPO Brandon Woods and Nita Franklin-Shanklin with a carload of gifts for our adopted families.



Central Office staff enjoyed a Christmas potluck lunch together to celebrate the holidays.

CO Receives Thanks for Raising Funds for United Way

“First and foremost...WOW! What an AMAZING accomplishment! I cannot stress enough how amazing that is. On behalf of United Way, thank you for your hard work and dedication. The efforts of your agency will truly impact our community and touch the lives of many people.

Thanks again Peggy (Guerin) to you and your wonderful team! It has been a true pleasure working with you.

Thanks so much!
Christine Dupuy
 United Way

Deputy Undersecretary Paula Roddy and **Administrative Assistant Peggy Guerin** led the United Way campaign, in which we have more than doubled the amount raised last year. The **Monroe, Lake Charles and Hammond Regional Offices** participated in the United Way campaign this year, and together we raised a total of \$11,742 from payroll deductions, one-time gifts and activities.

CO Donates Funds to Woman's Hospital

Woman's Hospital thanked Central Office for raising \$355.00 for Breast Cancer Awareness, with the funds benefitting outreach and education programs, including a Mobile Mammography Coach.

Administrative Assistant Shaeki Shanklin's son Burrell Williams III (Trey) was pictured in the Baton Rouge newspaper along with a group from the Young Leaders Academy. YLA is a leadership and education program that meets on Saturday mornings and challenges boys to think on their feet.

Hammond Regional Office

Superstar!

The Hammond OJJ Superstar for December was **PPS/J Dawnita Hodge**. She was nominated by **Courtney Pegues** for contributing to positive office morale.

Welcome

Hammond OJJ welcomed **Social Worker Daronda Lathan** to our staff in December. We're excited to have her and hope she'll enjoy being a part of our team.

Congratulations

PPO Matthew Bauer was promoted to PPO3. Congratulations Matt!



A Christmas themed Bulletin Board at New Directions, painted by Elliott B.

RM Julie Eudy, PPS Roy Wittorf, PPO3 Kevin Kulivan, PPO3 Mark Davis and PPO3 Kasey Wall attended a Christmas play at New Directions facility in Covington. Youth and staff at the facility put on quite a show!

Happy Holidays

Hammond OJJ held its Christmas Party for staff members, community providers, contract program staff, and others, who enjoyed a great display of food!!!



Tangi Food Pantry

Staff at Hammond OJJ each donated at least two canned goods to be donated to the Tangi Food Pantry in order to enjoy a “jeans day.” We collected a total of two boxes of food items which were donated to the Tangi Food Pantry.

American Idol at New Directions

PPO3 Kevin Kulivan attended a Talent Show at New Directions on January 14th. Kevin said the show was awesome! He said one of the kids did a Michael Jackson dance that was really good. Some staff members also participated in the talent show. It was judged like an American Idol event and the kids received prizes.



WHO DAT!!!

Hammond OJJ celebrated the Saints’ spot in the NFC Championship game with “Saints Day.” Staff was allowed to wear Saints jerseys

and/or T-shirts and show their pride for our boys in black and gold!!!



PPCT Training Conducted

Hammond OJJ staff participated in a PPCT refresher during January. Instructors were **PPS/J Johnny Prentice** and **PPS/J Carrie Austin**.

Jetson Center for Youth

Condolences

Executive Staff Officer Barbara Williams lost her father recently. We ask that you keep Ms. Williams and her family in your thoughts and prayers.

Jetson Students Receive Class Rings



Front row: JCY youth show off their class rings. Back row, Title 1 Director Ed Green, Principal Ronnie Knox, Director of Education Kim Mims and Director Daron Brown.

Scenic Alternative High School celebrated two events during a recent assembly. Twelve current and former students received their 2008-2009 class rings in recognition of their accomplishment of receiving their GEDs.

Director Daron Brown and **Principal Ronnie B. Knox** made the ring presentation to each student. Guests from central office and the community attended the event. Immediately following the ring ceremony, a student centered Christmas program began. Students read poetry, sang, danced and presented a unique skit. Even Santa, the jolly old elf, dropped in to wish everyone a Merry Christmas! A special thanks to all the students who had a part in the program and helped to make this a joyous time.

Teachers Janice Huggins and **Carolyn Rash**, along with the students, planned the program and rehearsed to make this ring and Christmas ceremony a memorable one!

Youth Treated to Off Campus Dinner

As an incentive for youth who perform work detail around the campus, several youth were treated to a holiday dinner at King Buffet in appreciation for their hard work and help in keeping the campus looking good.

Youth were **David F., Emanuel R., Troy M., Clifford B., Broderick E.** and **Stanley W.** Staff who attended were Director Daron Brown, James Spears, Melvin Carter and Nikisha Spann.

Youth were excited and thankful that they were able to go off campus and enjoy a nice meal with each other and staff.

Youth enjoyed themselves while laughing and talking with each other as well as staff. Their bellies were overfilled with the variety of foods from the buffet. Youths David F. and Stanley W. even took a shot at eating squid, or should I say octopus, because they couldn't decide which of the two it was, because it resembled both.

Overall, staff and youth enjoyed themselves. Staff expressed to the youth how much they appreciated their hard work. Youth appreciated how staff recognized their hard work and dedication in contributing to

keeping the facility clean and up to par. The trip was a success.



Jetson youth and staff who enjoyed the King Buffet outing.

Knights of Columbus donate stamps for JCY Youth

Youth will be able to mail extra letters thanks to a donation of stamps from the Knights of Columbus.

Lafayette/Opelousas Regional Office

Welcome to new Members of the Family

Lafayette/Opelousas OJJ recently welcomed three new members to its family.

St. Landry Parish **Officer Nicole Guidry** and her husband welcomed their daughter, **Alyssa Peyton** on Christmas Day, 2009.

Lafayette Parish **Officer Kristy Eames** and her husband welcomed their, son **Camron Joseph**, on January 5, 2010.

St. Martin Parish Officer **Tracy Flores** and her husband welcomed their son, **Mikah Joseph**, on January 13, 2010.

AMI Youth Participate in Winter Challenge Games

Students from AMI Kids-Acadiana group home in Branch participated in the AMI Kids Winter Challenge, an Olympics-styled team competition that featured over 120

competitors from AMI Kids program in Louisiana, as well as other southern states as far away as South Carolina. The competition took place at Acadian Baptist Center in Richard, LA, outside Eunice. The students who participated from AMI Kids Acadiana earned their trip through good behavior and hard work. The competition lasted from January 17 - 21, and included events such as volleyball, quiz bowl, life skills, first aid, and group challenges. The students who competed had a fantastic time, and really enjoyed building teamwork skills and earning medals for their accomplishments.

Christmas Celebrations and Giving Abound

Lafayette OJJ was treated to a Christmas lunch in December. The main course was a delicious pork roast with rice and gravy, prepared by Lafayette Parish **PPO Courtney Holderman**. Other officers prepared appetizers, side dishes, and desserts. The cost was paid by funds raised by the Positive Focus Committee. It was a wonderful way for the OJJ family to share the holiday spirit.



Left to right: SW Maria Menard, PPOs Heather Campbell, Joey Graciana, Roy Brown and Nick Landry



Left, PPO Michelle Deshotel and PS Patty Thomas.

AC Alina Perro's family volunteered at St. Joseph's Diner in December. The family worked stocking shelves and serving food to the homeless. Alina commented that it was a great way to teach her children to give back to the community, and also to remind them that there are those who need a helping hand.

Last month, Inside Scoop reported on Vermilion Parish **PPO Rhonda Gallet's** client, **Ebony B.**, receiving a graduation ring from donations provided by officers in the Lafayette/Opelousas Region. At the beginning of December, once the total amount of pledges and donations was counted, enough was collected to also purchase a cap and gown and invitation graduation package for Ebony.

In the spirit of Christmas, Lafayette/Opelousas OJJ took up a collection to give one client a special Christmas. **Carey H.** was chosen by the **Positive Focus Committee** from a list of clients who normally would not receive Christmas gifts, due to family circumstances. St. Martin Parish **PPO Tracy Flores**, who supervises the case, presented the youth with an American Express gift card for him to use as he pleases. **PPO Flores** said that the youth was overjoyed when he received his gift card, and said that he planned to purchase everything on his wish list from the Mall of Acadiana. **PPO Flores** wishes to thank Lafayette/Opelousas OJJ for the generosity and giving spirit of its team members.

A True Life Case From Our Files

As we all know, many of the youth we deal with come from less than desirable home environments. From time to time, we encounter youths who experience horrible situations at home.

Cynthia B. was placed on supervised probation in 2007 in Vermilion Parish for FINS. Evidence of neglect in the home was pointed out to the Office of Community Services by **PPO Kevin Broussard**, but no

case was opened. Cynthia had trouble at school and at home, and ended up in non-secure custody. She completed a program and was sent home. She had a hard time adjusting, and went back into custody.

The youth became pregnant while home, and gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. In discussions of the youth's family life with **PPO Rhonda Gallet**, the youth confided that, starting at around age 11, her mother had begun to prostitute her out. She told of at least 20 men that her mother let into her bed in exchange for money and drugs. **PPO Gallet** contacted detectives in Vermilion Parish, and the Louisiana State Police was brought in to aid in the investigation. **PPO Gallet** provided an enormous deal of moral support and a "shoulder to cry on" while the youth recounted the details of her ordeal with investigators. In December the youth's mother was arrested and charged with aggravated rape. Five men, including the youth's stepfather were arrested on felony-grade sexual offenses. Two other men are still being sought. The youth is set to be released from non-secure custody in early 2010, and is enthusiastic about completing her GED, and going to trade school to earn her LPN.

The youth has realized that she is not to blame for the traumatic experience, and knows the importance of a stable home in the life of a young child, which she intends to provide for her own daughter. **Cynthia** has taught us a lesson in overcoming adversity, and has expressed a great deal of gratitude for **PO Gallet's** support and guidance.

A Doer of the Word

by **Steve Neef, PPS, Lafayette OJJ**

PPO 3 Karla Meranto has been with Lafayette OJJ since June 5, 2006. For some three and a half years now she has been assigned to the somewhat remote and rather rugged St. Mary Parish Unit. (She lives over seventy miles from the office.) And being a full-time probation and parole officer as well

as a reserve police officer in her spare time, Karla is very active in her community.

With a bachelor's degree in Family and Child Studies, her background and education seems to have wed law enforcement and social work into a sort of combination "cop with a heart" mentality. Her clients, their families, and their victims, too, are all of concern to Karla. Ask Officer Meranto about any one of her clients and you will think she knows each of them - and their family and entire situation - as well as her own kids. (And if you ask anyone in St. Mary Parish in the court system, the school system, law enforcement, and the social work profession if they know Karla Meranto, they will likely answer in the affirmative.)

A single mom with three children of her own and struggling to make ends meet herself, Karla doesn't let her busy schedule and demanding lifestyle stand in her way of going beyond the call of duty to help her troubled youth. In recent months, for instance, she left a social gathering on the weekend to be with one of her probation clients who was in critical condition in the emergency room of a hospital after overdosing on drugs. On separate occasions she even inquired into the possibility of taking two of her delinquent clients with very unstable family situations into her home to help solve their problems.

A few months ago at the request of a judge who was in a real bind with a potential OCS child who had no place to go, Karla came to the rescue and opened her home to the unfortunate youth (whom we'll call "Tony"). Tony's background was very lacking, to say the least. He was a victim of an extremely dysfunctional family situation. And he had been a friend of her son's since they were children. Officer Meranto didn't take long at all to decide that she was going to open her home to this young man. In fact, she didn't consider the cost one bit prior to her decision to take in this "foster child" straight from court. Karla says she just wasn't going to let this needy young teenager be sent off to a shelter or facility far away from his family and

home town when she had the opportunity to intervene and prevent such a tragedy.



Front row: daughter Gabrielle, PPO Karla Meranto. Back row: foster child Tony, sons Brandon and Jordan.

Officer Meranto says her whole family got involved right away in making this new arrangement work. Her older son moved his sleeping quarters to another room to allow Tony to share a bedroom with his younger brother. And while it has been somewhat challenging financially since she has not received any benefits whatsoever from OCS since he moved in three months ago (even though she has now completed all the required training and necessary inspections for foster care at her own expense), Karla considers this nothing less than a privilege. In fact, she was somewhat reluctant to even allow this article to be written because it could send the wrong message. (She wanted the article to be about Tony and only agreed to let this story be printed after realizing that it just might inspire others to think more about why they are here and the meaning of life. Karla believes that helping one's fellow man is what this life is really all about.)

Officer Meranto is no stranger to crisis situations and knows first-hand what it is to deal with very trying times, being a single working parent and coming from a broken home herself while she was growing up. Her family even had to reside in a housing project for a time when she was a teenager. Just a couple of years ago her home burned down and they lost everything.

Yet she has bounced back just fine. Suffering a slight stroke in 2006 (while she was taking the PET to apply for this job as a PPO!) didn't deter her determination one iota to take on this somewhat stressful job and the opportunity to help troubled youth and their families while enhancing public safety in the process. Two years ago her dear uncle was murdered in cold blood on the rather quiet streets of their small home town of Berwick. And last year one of her son's best friends tragically drowned at a class outing.

Karla's latest project, which she is in the process of launching at this very moment, is to begin an outreach ministry of support to other single, divorced, and widowed adults who want to deal with their particular difficulties and unique challenges in the right way. (Her mother, who is now deceased, had founded a similar outreach.)

Not surprisingly, we understand that at least one other state agency has been trying to offer Officer Meranto a position with their office. And another agency seems to be interested in her as well. Still we are hoping that Karla will stay with us, not only for the valuable and admirable service she provides to her clients and their families, as well as to the courts and the community at large, but so that other PPOs can learn more about what our *Mission* and "field work" are really all about here at OJJ.

Lake Charles Regional Office

Congratulations

Angela Stevens celebrated one year of OJJ employment in November.

Hollie Comeaux celebrated one year of OJJ employment in December.

PPO2 Garrick Chambers celebrated 2 years of OJJ service in December.

Jeffery Haley celebrated one year of OJJ employment in December.

PPO3 Monet Newman celebrated 4 years of OJJ service in December.

Erline Pierce celebrated one year back in our office in January.

PPO1 Hollie Comeaux has done a good job addressing her clients' needs with services in the community. She has only one client that was placed in OJJ custody over the last year. Hollie sustained a serious injury on the last day of the POST Academy. Despite her injury, she returned to work with permission from her doctor because of her dedication to her caseload.



Hollie

Comeaux's graduation from the POST Academy.

Congratulations to **PPO Karli Pullard** and **PPO Delisa Clark** who participated in Glock transition school on one of the coldest days of the year thus far!

Lake Charles OJJ Says Goodbye

Farewell to our appreciated **Social Worker, Janice Manuel**. She accepted a job with the Calcasieu Parish School Board but will continue to work with our at-risk youth. She will be greatly missed and it will be difficult to find a replacement.

PPO3 Ronald Gilchrist helped a young man (M.A.) get his picture ID in order to get his GED. The young man earned his GED and now is interested in going to Sowela Tech.

PPO1 Jeff Haley has done a good job recruiting Cameron Parish agencies to provide community service opportunities for his probationers.

A young lady in the caseload of **PPO3 Monet Newman** (K.R.) received her GED during December.

PPO3 Alexis Heflin, PPO1 Jeff Haley, and PPO3 Karli Pullard attended the Christmas party at the Southwest Louisiana Marine Institute to support our kids.

PPO Rebecca Harmon's grant request was awarded and she began seeking kids to refer to the Great Stories Program.

PPO Monet Newman provided assistance to her client's mother, who was struggling with finances, so the mother could obtain a certified copy of her birth certificate and be eligible for housing for her family.

PPO1 Jeff Haley generously donated a nebulizer to one of his clients who was in need. The family was extremely grateful.

Lake Charles OJJ celebrated a great Christmas party and gift exchange in December. We had great food and great participation! **PPS Ken Vidrine** led the grace and we appreciate his spiritual leadership. **PPO Garrick Chambers, PPO Angie Stevens, and PPO Delisa Clark** wore festive Christmas attire to add to the celebration!!!! ALL had a great time!

PPO3 Fred Fontenot should be commended for setting an example for the staff at one of our local programs and for unintentionally providing a teachable moment. Facility staff called Fred to meet with a young man who was acting out in the program. The young man had shut down and was refusing to comply with staff's directives. Instead of yelling at the young man, Mr. Fred reminded him of how well he had done and shared that he knew there must be more to his behavior. The young man eventually cried and admitted he was simply having a bad day. After their talk, the youth was able to calm himself and successfully continue his school day. Thank you, Fred, for setting the example.

A juvenile under the supervision of **PPO Rebecca Harmon** earned his GED at the Southwest Louisiana Marine Institute this month!

PPS Ken Vidrine, PPS Melissa Cross, and RM Ann Vick completed the CPTP course regarding Coaching for Improved Employee Performance in January. Further, **RM Ann Vick** has been conducting informal leadership training with **Ken Vidrine** and **Melissa Cross**. We are reading the leadership book and having monthly supervisory meetings. Supervisor monthly reports will now outline the seven major points of the leadership book.

Alexis Heflin demonstrated generosity by offering to provide a hair treatment for one of her Harbour House clients. Alexis wanted to reduce the bullying and teasing occurring as a result of this young lady's unmanageable hair, so she sought these services without expectation of reimbursement.

Lake Charles OJJ staff enjoyed a visit from **Dr. Livers** and **Ms. Lewis** to our office. Many were appreciative to have face-to-face introductions.

Our office participated in SAVRY training, and the adaptability of our staff was evident. Our officers welcome the new process and are not at all afraid of a possible work load increase. Attitudes are positive. Thank you to **Monet Newman and Rebecca Harmon**, our trainers, for all the preparation required to train the staff. We would like to recognize both officers for attending the SAVRY training and investing a great deal of time in completing all homework assignments.

We Prepare To Move into Our Beautiful New Digs

Lake Charles OJJ's new office is complete, and we are all VERY EXCITED! The moving process has begun. Prison Enterprises has been delivering BEAUTIFUL, wooden,

matching furniture. We will likely occupy the new building full-time as of February 1!

Kudos to **RM Ann Vick** who dedicated a great portion of her month organizing service providers, recruiting manual labor from local trustees, delegating furniture for each office, setting up server/phone services, contacting the fire marshal, and arranging for transfer of copy machines. Don't let the 38½ years of service fool you – Ann is very strong and holds her own with heavy lifting!

Several employees really contributed above and beyond in the moving process:

Karli Pullard and **Monet Newman**, two of our shortest employees, teamed up to unload chairs from the boxes and distribute chairs throughout the offices. They worked as hard as the guys! No excuses!

Fred Fontenot spent a great deal of time with IT professionals and phone service technicians to assure that our phone/data lines were properly installed.

Garrick Chambers and **Ken Vidrine** moved lots of heavy boxes of paper and did a great deal of heavy lifting. Garrick is a trooper and a very hard worker! ☺

Erline Pierce and **Annette Stoddard** packed the majority of our office supplies and on the initial day of furniture arrival, **Ronald Gilchrist** lowered many office chairs from the moving truck, which was heavy work.

Many others worked hard too. We simply wanted to recognize those employees who repeatedly received positive mention.

Our office extends great appreciation to the following volunteers: **Gabe Vick, Gary Pierce** and **Greg Clark**. Gabe Vick, son of RM Ann Vick, contributed time and effort in hauling off bulky trash from the new furniture deliveries. Gary Pierce, husband of **Erline Pierce**, donated a moving dolly and assisted with heavy lifting. Greg Clark, husband of **Delisa Clark**, donated his times and was

extremely helpful in removing furniture from large boxes.

Monroe Regional Office

Welcome

Monroe OJJ welcomes new **Probation Officer Jeremy Fox**. Jeremy comes to us POST. certified and ready to work. Welcome to the family.

Farewell

Monroe OJJ said goodbye to two longtime employees who retired in December, **PPO 3 Donald Hamler** and **Administrative Coordinator 3 Brenda DuPriest**. They are missed!

Monroe OJJ celebrated Christmas in December with a luncheon. Everyone brought their favorite 'fun food', and we had a lot of laughs playing Dirty Santa.

Monroe OJJ provided food baskets and turkeys to three of our families for the Christmas Holiday. They were very appreciative.

Probation Supervisors Karl Wallace, Orlando Davis and **Gail Wilson** attended the CPTP course for Performance Planning & Review in Ruston in December.

SAVRY was initiated at Monroe OJJ in December, and fully implemented in January.

In January a Parent Listening Meeting was held at a church in Monroe. **Assistant Secretary Girard Melancon** and **Deputy Assistant Secretary Carolyn Lewis** coordinated the meeting, which was a huge success. Parental attendance was very good, and the feedback received from the participants was overwhelmingly positive. **Regional Manager Patty Newman** and her supervisors are very proud of the probation officers in Monroe Region, and the work they do with their clients and families.

Natchitoches Regional Office

The Natchitoches staff presented three families with food boxes for Christmas. The Natchitoches staff enjoyed food, fun and fellowship at the office on December 18, 2009.

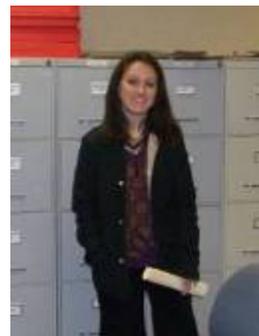
Natchitoches staff prequalified with firearms in December.

Congratulations

We wish the best for **AC3 Monica Breedlove Achord** and her new husband **Rodney**. The happy couple was married December 16.



Congratulations to **NSU Intern Emily Stelly**, who graduated from Northwestern State University in December. **PPS Simon Sarpy** and **SSC4 Nelda Graham** attended the NSU Banquet for Emily.



Emily Stelly

PPS Simon Sarpy and **wife Frances** attended the Christmas party held in Baton Rouge in December. Mr. and Mrs. Sarpy enjoyed the festive party with Dr. Livers, co-workers and friends. There was plenty of food, dancing and fellowship.

New Orleans/Jefferson Regional Office

Welcome

New Orleans OJJ welcomes **PO1 Khristina Koontz** to our family. Khristina transferred from Bridge City.

Community Based Services in Action

News Orleans OJJ sponsored a gift bag for a very deserving youth. **Social Worker Roxann Tuircuit** enlisted the assistance of the DDay Museum and the Audubon Nature Institute who generously donated tickets and various items from their gift shop. The youth, **S. Smith**, is 17 years old and enrolled in Job Corps. He is successfully meeting all of his service plan goals, his Probation Officer **P03 Dorothy Crump** is extremely proud of his progress. She said "This youth is not only meeting his goals, he is working hard and doing so with a smile". Also the donation from the Audubon Nature Institute was so generous, we have enough tickets to take additional youth to the Aquarium or to the Zoo as a group!



Pictured above, the DDay Museum and below, Youth S. Smith receiving his gift bag.



A family in the caseload of **PO2 Daria Melder** experienced an emergency situation. Daria and Roxann Tuircuit immediately asked the office to provide donations for this needy family. The office collected two large boxes of food, including a turkey, stuffing and trimmings. The family thanked Daria with tearful hugs, and we thank Daria for caring and inviting us as a staff to participate in giving.

PPS Shawn Herbert volunteered to teach a course for the juvenile curriculum at the Slidell POST Academy. Shawn said, "I enjoyed both preparing to teach the course as well as the actual instruction." The class consisted of students from Adult Probation and Parole and various Sheriffs' Departments. Shawn was given an instructor shirt by Captain Milan, Slidell POST Academy Director, and was invited to the next academy.

New Orleans OJJ started their celebration day with an enthusiastic game of Family Feud! Staff laughed and had a good time, congratulations to the Furious Five Family the winners of the competition and thanks to our very own Richard Dawson (**RM Kelly Clement**) and his assistant Vanna White (**Program Specialist Paulette Carter**) (and yes, we know Vanna White is from Wheel of Fortune.)

Staff also participated in a Christmas luncheon with the usual spread of delicious food, and also a friendly game of Dirty Santa.

Pictured below, Program Specialist Paulette Carter and PO3 Vera Seals.



Regional Manager Kelly Clement, right.

Shreveport Regional Office

Congratulations

PPO Fabrecia Roberson was honored by being selected as Shreveport **OJJ Employee of the Month** for December. PPO Roberson is a dedicated new officer who expresses good leadership skills.

Congratulations to **PPS Guy May** who was presented a Leadership Award by **RM Kristi Martin**.

Outstanding job performances were recognized in December with presentation of 2009 overall employee awards for Shreveport OJJ. Supervisory staff selected **PPO 3 Natalie Pope** as **Employee of the Year for 2009**. **PPO 1 Richard Dukes** was honored as **Rookie Employee of the Year for 2009**. Probation and Parole staff selected **PPS Rick Ladner** as **Supervisor of the Year for 2009**. Staff honored as having the **Most Positive Attitude** for 2009 were **PPO Charles Herrmann** and **PPO LaNita Lars**. **Top Firearm Performances** were recognized as follows: **Expert Shooter: PPO Richard Dukes; Sharp Shooter: PPO Daniel Barnard;** and **Marksman: PPS Steve Martino**.



Pictured are Richard Dukes, Rookie Employee of the Year; Natalie Pope, Employee of the Year and Rick Ladner, Supervisor of the Year.

RM Kristi Martin also presented Regional Manager Awards for Outstanding Commitment to **PPS Kim Carlisle** and **Admin. Coordinator Shatina Salter**, and an award for **Outstanding Professional Growth** was presented to **PPS Steve Martino**. Honored staff received trophies, plaques, and certificates.



Pictured are: Charles Herrmann, Positive Attitude Award; Kim Carlisle, Outstanding Commitment Award; Steve Martino, Professional Growth Award; LaNita Lars, Positive Attitude Award; and Shatina Salter, Outstanding Commitment Award.

Shreveport OJJ staff enjoyed Christmas lunch together in December. We decided to have a Chili Cook-Off this year, and **PPO Jarred Cram** took Top Chef honors!

PPO 3 Ticia Juneau, with assistance from **PS Jan Crain**, conducted PREA training at Hope Youth Ranch, Johnny Gray Jones Shelter, and Rutherford House during December. PPO Juneau is a certified PREA trainer after completing the PREA Train the Trainers curriculum sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance.

After-hour curfew checks were conducted by staff under the supervision of **PPS Guy May** and **PPS Steve Martino** in December. PPOs participating were **PPO Todd Carlisle**, **PPO Terri Harber**, **PPO Jennifer Hill** and **PPO Nitasha Gibson**.

Swanson Center for Youth

A Sad Goodbye



Swanson said goodbye to **Youthcare Worker Sallie Scott (Bradley)**, who tragically lost her life in an act of violence on New Year's Day. Ms. Scott was 38 years old, and had three children, ages 21, 16 and 15. A member of the Swanson team for three years, Ms. Scott served in Cypress Dormitory, the Crisis Intervention Unit. Colleagues described her as extremely friendly, a notable hard worker, and an all-around nice person. "I had the opportunity to interact with her on several occasions during rounds at SCY, and I too found her to be very professional, and a very nice person," said Dr. Livers.

Congratulations

Rebecca Florsheim, an Instructor at SCY's Southside Alternative School received her PhD in Education from the University of Louisiana at Monroe in December .

Youth Attend Christmas Plays

In December two youth from each dorm were treated to an off-campus trip. **Director Carolyn Atkins, Chaplain Rev. Ricky James** and other staff took the youth to see "Scrooge", a Christmas play put on at the Family Life Center in West Monroe.

One youth from each dorm was taken to see a Christmas play at the Pentecostals of the Twin Cities, also in West Monroe.

Youth Visit a Nursing Home to Bring Christmas Cheer

In December **Director Carolyn Atkins, Deputy Director Vernon Foy** and **Reverend Ricky James** escorted members of the SCY choir to Riverside Nursing Home in Monroe. **Mrs. Lydia May** and youth from her horticulture class also went along. While there, the choir sang Christmas carols and presented each resident with a Christmas gift. Mrs. May and the horticulture class presented the residents with a plants grown in the greenhouse.



Vernon Foy and Lydia May



Chaplain James and boys with gifts



Director Atkins and resident

Director Atkins Holds Open House

Director Carolyn Atkins held a Christmas open house in December. Director Atkins' day started out serving breakfast to Team C during the 5:45 am shift debriefing which was held at the house. All staff were invited to stop by for refreshments and fellowship. Dr. Livers even dropped in to have a bite. Then at 5:45 pm, Team D stopped by to enjoy refreshments during their roll call. Needless to say, Director Atkins had a very busy day!



Dr. Livers and Director Carolyn Atkins



Russell McCall, James Turner, Cedric Rogers, Ronny Miles, Blanchard Day, Melvin Carr, and Romona Montgomer enjoy the open house.



Troy White, Russell McCall and Vandy Jenkins at the open house.

Fireworks Display Presented for Youth

SCY Electrician John Brown and his associate Brad Johnston donated \$1,000 worth of fireworks to put on a show for the youth. The youth were allowed to come outside to watch the semi-professional fireworks display put on by Mr. Brown and Mr. Johnston who set up across the street from the facility.

Tallulah Regional Office

Tallulah OJJ exchanged gift and enjoyed good food at the Christmas Party. Deputy Assistant Secretary Carolyn Lewis visited in December. The staff appreciated her taking time to talk with each one individually.



DAS Carolyn Lewis and RM Ruth Stephens.



Tallulah staff enjoy their Christmas party.

The extreme cold took its toll on the town of Tallulah. We were without water for 2 ½ days and remained under a “boil order” for several days. Tallulah OJJ remained open with staff buying water, boiling water and bringing safe water from their homes. The schools were closed for several days due to broken water lines. Several members of the staff reported broken water lines at their homes.

Thibodaux Regional Office

Congratulations

PPO Josh Becnel was selected Employee of the Month for December.

Administrative Coordinator Kim Foret is the January Employee of the Month.

We also welcome to our TOJJ family an intern from Nicholls State University, **Lauren Plaisance**.



TOJJ's Christmas tree.

TOJJ celebrated Christmas with a non-traditional meal. We had a great time together.

Mrs. Supriya Jindal, First Lady of Louisiana, visited Bayou Bouef Elementary School in December, where she presented two Promethean Boards (huge computerized display boards) and conducted a lesson with the students. **PPO Allison Lirette's** daughter is a student at BBES and was able to experience this event.

A Heartwarming Story from TOJJ

By PPO Allison Lirette

On December 15, torrential rainstorms struck several parishes in our region. Lafourche Parish was one of the hardest hit, especially the Alidore community in Raceland. 46 public housing units and 102 residential structures took in some 4-6 feet of water. Citizens had to be rescued by boats. Alidore is a low income/high crime community. The people who were affected by the flood waters evacuated their homes, some with just the clothes on their back. These people already had nothing, and now what little they did have, was gone. They lost everything...just 10 days before Christmas.

I began receiving phone calls in the midst of this crisis from two families throughout the day, with one family having a 6 month old baby. Many times probation officers are the only stability these people have in their lives. They did not know where to turn, so they called me. It was the most horrible feeling of helplessness that I ever felt. All I could do is ask them what size clothing they wore.

I could not do anything, but reach out to a fellow officer, who wishes to remain anonymous. I sat in this person's office with disbelief. If I could have moved mountains that day, I would have.

The officer made a few phone calls and sent a few text messages. The next morning the officer brought a carload full of clothing, some with the tags still on them, shoes, and especially clothes for the baby. We headed out to the motel where they were temporarily staying and brought the clothing items. They were so appreciative for the generosity that was given to them in a time of great need.

I call this officer my guardian angel because she came through when there was such a great need. This is the true meaning of teamwork!!!

Just wanted to share this with all of you of what we do on a daily basis to meet our mission in good times and bad...

The Inside Scoop...of OJJ

The Inside Scoop...of OJJ is published monthly to communicate with and about OJJ staff in offices and facilities throughout the state, about agency activities, happenings and items of interest.

The Inside Scoop...of OJJ is produced by the Central Office with input from staff statewide.

...until next month

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Marlyn Goins-McCants, *Family & Community Liaison*
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