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# what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

I've been thinking about the value of reading, and about education and learning as an avenue out of poverty. Louisiana has a large number of children living in poverty – including many of our kids. Reading and learning are the tickets they need to achieve success and have a better life. Wouldn't it be great if we could pass on the gift of being avid readers to our kids?

One of my grandmothers didn't finish 8<sup>th</sup> grade, but she was a woman of great intellect and dignity. There is no doubt in my mind that she became a refined adult through her love of reading. My other grandmother grew up working hard like all the others of her generation, but she found a way to get a college education and become a teacher. She was able to pass on her love of reading to her students and her daughter, my Mom. There are also so many examples of people who have climbed their way out of poverty through education and love of reading and learning.

What is on your reading list these days? Who are your favorite authors? What have you been reading recently for entertainment, for your spiritual and professional growth?

I read two or three books at a time, one of each type. Right now I'm reading a book about the Great Depression (the serious book), and a no-brainer mystery for pure entertainment (I'll fly through that one in a few days). I'm sure I'll start another one after my next trip to the discount rack at Barnes and Noble or Sam's Club. While you're shopping for real bargains, try Dollar Tree. Yes, Dollar Tree has some great hardbound books for, yep, you got it, one dollar.

Because of the relatively short time that we have our kids in custody, we may not be able to see their efforts to earn a diploma or GED come to fruition. My challenge to everyone who works with our youth is to find ways to ensure that they are getting the remediation and encouragement they need to read fluently. Our La MOD programming should provide ways to create opportunities for meaningful reading to help our kids assimilate information – an important part of the values we emphasize with our youth.

Let's think of creative ways to encourage our kids. We can arrange trips to the library and help get our kids comfortable in that setting, and familiar with the resources that are available there. We can encourage our programs for supervision kids to do the same. Perhaps we can set aside one day a week, or a month, for kids to present book reports. We can encourage some kids to help tutor their peers. We can create book clubs for our kids. If we can make learning and reading fun for them we may have an opportunity to turn negative trends around into positive ones. Here's novel idea. Let's ask the kids what would make reading and learning fun for them.

Reading is so fundamental to our lives that we often take for granted our ability to read and understand. As adults, we read to grow and learn, to escape from the trials and tribulations of daily life, to remain engaged and interesting. (Yes, I said "interesting" not interested.) Reading is fundamental to our survival, it helps us to rise out of poverty, enhances our quality of life and provides entertainment. Reading is a pro-social way to spend time and helps us become more interesting people. We need to be able to read to grow and nourish ourselves.

If you can read this message, you know that you have my thanks for all you do to meet the mission.

Sincerely,

"Doc" *Dr. Mary Livers*

**P.S. It's always a good idea to give books as Christmas gifts. They have a great shelf life and they are always the right size.**

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