
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

I can't believe it's already close to the end of May...June will be here before we know it. I am happy to report that there's beginning to be tomatoes on my plants already. With tomatoes, like OJJ, what a difference a year makes. Last year I had blooms but no fruit. This year there is fruit on the vines – Creole, cherry and Beefmaster tomatoes. Progress is a wonderful thing.

We had a visit from a very interesting group of international visitors this week, guest of the U.S. State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program. Eighteen people from around the world were invited to participate in a program to learn about the United States' juvenile justice system. The group spent time in Washington, DC for orientation, and visited several locations around the country, including Missouri and Louisiana. Countries represented included Belize, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Brazil, Chile, Germany, Greece, India, Japan, Oman, The Philippines, Sierra Leone, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Turkey and Venezuela. First the group met at central office with staff who explained our programming and described the reforms of recent years, followed on Tuesday with a tour of Bridge City. Members of the group posed some interesting questions that revealed that many of them experience the same kind of challenges that we face. Based on some of their questions, it appears that some countries might need to enact legislation similar to PREA.

DAS Carolyn Lewis and I made a trip to Thibodaux to visit with RM Angela Koenig and her staff. I enjoyed seeing everyone in the regional office, and it appears that things are going very well there. Carolyn and I had a good experience and we look forward to visiting again. I really like getting out and spending time with staff in the regional P&P offices.

There is no new budget information to relate since our last update. Right now there is no indication what's in HB1 – the budget bill – other than what we learned at the beginning of the session. What I can report – and you probably saw this in the newspaper – the infamous “holiday” bill is no longer alive. I know there was a lot of staff concern about the bill, which would have required staff to take leave or leave without pay for holidays for a year.

I know everybody in Louisiana, around the country, and all over the world, is just sick about the oil catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico. It's so depressing, and what makes it more depressing is that we all feel so helpless. I know we are all hoping that BP can get this situation resolved, no one more than Governor Jindal. A lot of people are working around the clock to deal with the situation. Gov. Jindal truly understands that this crisis will affect Louisiana for years to come and he is doing everything he can. A number of agencies are literally working 24/7 at GOHSEP, including the governor, his staff, the Louisiana National Guard, state agencies including the Departments of Wildlife and Fisheries, Agriculture and Forestry, Corrections, Economic Development, Environmental Quality, State Police, LSU Health Services, Justice, Board of Regents, Social Services, Transportation and Development and Workforce Development, the U.S. Coast Guard, FEMA, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the American Red Cross.

I've been trying to remind everyone that hurricane season is around the corner and now is the time to inventory supplies, get ready, get a plan and get prepared. We will do readiness assessments and exercises between now and June. I hope we do not have to deploy anyone, but the chances are that we might have to, so now is the time to get ready. Also, there will be a tax holiday May 29 and 30, when we can purchase certain emergency supplies free from the four percent state sales tax. A press release with all the information may be found on the Department of Revenue website at <http://revenue.louisiana.gov>

Wishing each of you in every OJJ location a wonderful weekend, with my thanks for all you do every day to meet the mission.

Sincerely,
“Doc”

Dr. Mary Livers

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