
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

All the news and pictures of the terrible disaster in Haiti bring back lots of bad memories for everyone. For me, one of the bad memories is the Oklahoma City bombing, with the pancaked structures, chaos and fear. The lack of response to people's basic needs will bring back memories of Hurricane Katrina. Because of that, I have to filter how much I can watch and hear. All of us have a threshold of just how much we can absorb of the misery and helplessness that is going on now in the island nation of Haiti, and that we have experienced here in our own country. We need to remember that a lot of us in Louisiana may be reliving the trauma associated with Katrina, and we ought to be aware of the effect on friends, co-workers and certainly, our youth. It would not surprise me to find that people around us may be experiencing anxiety, depression and other mental health symptoms. We need to be aware of the possibilities and take the necessary steps to address these issues as they come up.

I would ask you to keep the people of Haiti, as well as the thousands of people involved in the rescue operations, in your thoughts and prayers as we enjoy the long weekend.

You may be aware that Supreme Court Chief Justice Kitty Kimball, who is also a member of JJIC, suffered a stroke several days ago. I heard through confidential connections that she is asking for her Blackberry, so that is a great sign. I am so pleased to hear that she is making a quick recovery. Justice Kimball is such a great leader and passionate about juvenile justice issues – I look forward to having her back on the bench, back at JJIC and continuing her leadership, just as soon as possible.

A number of juvenile judges paid a visit to Bridge City this week for a tour of the facility. We hosted 20 judges from all over Louisiana, and several other dignitaries. They visited dorms and were able to engage with the youth and staff. They witnessed firsthand the transformation of the facility into a therapeutic model, and were very impressed with what they discovered. They remarked on how polite and respectful our youth are. It didn't hurt that Chef Ron Sonnier and his Culinary Arts students showed off their skills and served warm cookies right from the oven. A training session was held at the facility to top off the experience. Many thanks to the team at BCCY who worked very hard to assure a successful tour for the judges: State Director John Anderson, Deputy Director Michael Gaines, Asst. Director Ricky Wright, Adm. Program 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.

As you know the holiday Monday celebrates Martin Luther King Day. I hope you will take a moment to reflect on the contributions this great American made to our nation. Like the Jetson Choir sings, the dream is "Still Alive" (check out the video of the choir posted on our website under Newsroom.) As ever, thanks for all you do every day to meet the mission.

Sincerely,
"Doc"

Dr. Mary Livers

Mary L. Livers, MSW, PH.D, Deputy Secretary

Office of Juvenile Justice • PO Box 66458 • Baton Rouge, LA 70896 • e: Whatsupdoc?OJJ@la.gov • www.ojd.louisiana.gov